

# MARSHAL TITO

by

MICHAEL PADEV

*"In Marshal Tito the Partisans have  
found an outstanding leader, glorious in  
the fight for freedom."*

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## PREFACE

I AM greatly indebted to the United Committee of South Slavic Americans in New York, and to their President, the Slovene-American writer Louis Adamietz, for material on the Yugoslav Partisan Movement. My thanks are also due to the Committee of South Slavs in London, under the presidency of Professor Boris Furlan, and "Free Yugoslavia", the Partisan Republican Association in Great Britain, for the invaluable help they have given me in my research work. I owe most of all to Mr. Milan Smetana for his assistance and friendly advice.

The information on Tito's childhood and early days I collected from various people who knew him then. An account of his life in prison was given to me by a man who spent several years in the same cell at Lepoglava, in Yugoslavia, in which Tito was imprisoned for five years. The story of his underground work in Yugoslavia I have pieced together from the accounts of various Yugoslavs who took part in it. I have relied on my own memory and on several excellent reports given to me by members of the International Brigade for the chapter on the Spanish War. The description of the actual organisation of the Partisan Movement is based on the evidence of the official documents issued by Marshal Tito's Headquarters as well as on eyewitness accounts of the fighting itself. The chapter on Macedonia is based on my own personal experiences in Macedonia.

All political opinions expressed in this book are my own opinions and not those of any political organisation in any country.

June, 1944, London.

M. P.

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*"THIS IS TITO"*

"AND what are you going to do when you get to France?" There was a lilt of suspicion in the Fascist frontier guard's voice.

"I'm going to see the Exhibition," Ivan replied.

"But you haven't even enough money to stay two days in Paris!"

"Surely that's my own business. As a matter of fact I've got a sister living there. If I don't have to pay for rent or food I shan't need much money, shall I?"

The frontier guard was not convinced. "Give his luggage a thorough search," he ordered, and Ivan, dragging his old battered suitcase alongside him, was marched off by two carabinieri.

I came through the frontier inspection without difficulty. Instructions had been given that the utmost courtesy be shown to journalists, and the frontier control officer, seeing my special visa, saluted and flashed a smile at me as he said.

"I hope you liked our country."

"I have had no opportunity of seeing it. I travelled straight through."

"So I see." He smiled again. "You should stay a while on your way back to the Balkans."

I assured him that nothing would give me greater pleasure and put my passport in my pocket. When I reached the platform I decided to wait for Ivan. A few minutes later the control officer sauntered up to me.

"That's your train over there," he pointed. "It

leaves in ten minutes' time so you had better take your seat. Incidentally, with your first-class ticket you should have travelled by the express. It goes straight through and you would not have needed to wait here at the frontier."

"I travelled with friends," I said shortly, resentful at this interference, camouflaged as helpfulness, into my private affairs.

"Not the suspicious Yugoslav who is being searched, I imagine?" The Fascist's tone was apologetic, as if to excuse himself for making such a preposterous suggestion.

"Precisely," I replied. "And there is not, as far as I can see, anything suspicious about him."

"My dear sir"—the man spoke perfect Serbo-Croat—"the trouble with you journalists is that you think that anyone like that—anyone belonging to the so-called underground—will provide you with good copy. Possibly"—he shrugged his shoulders—"but one cannot be too careful."

I was thoroughly annoyed by his attitude by now and asked abruptly:

"When is he coming out?"

"That depends on what we find in his luggage. And I somehow think we may find quite a lot of subversive literature. Leaflets on Spain, on democracy, the Popular Front and all the rest of it. I know my job and I know very well that there are hundreds—thousands—of men like this trying to get to Spain and all of them say they are going to the Paris exhibition. We have to be on our guard."

"But the man has a bona fide Italian transit visa. You can't detain him, can you?"

"As if I cared about his visa! It may be a fake for all I know. He's travelling from Zagreb to Paris and

all he has is twenty-five francs in French currency." He broke off suddenly. "But you should hurry. Your train . . ."

"Don't worry about my train, I can always take the next one. I think I'll wait for the Yugoslav."

The Fascist's face clouded over.

"That is for me to decide. I can put you on this train if I want to." He hesitated. "All right then, have it your own way. I can just imagine the lurid tales you would spread about our Fascist militia once you got to France. Yugoslav kidnapped at Italian Frontier—that's the sort of headline you might think up, isn't it?"

Angrily he turned and left me.

\* \* \* \*

I had met Ivan in Milan. I had to wait half an hour there for a train and while I was examining the beauties of the new railway station of which the Italian Press had boasted so much, a weary, shabby man came up to me and enquired in execrable French which was the platform for Marseilles.

Directly I saw him I realised that he came from the Balkans. He might have been a Greek waiter, a minor railway official in Bulgaria or a small shopkeeper in Yugoslavia. Beneath his brown overcoat—obviously inherited from his father—he wore a blue suit that gleamed with old age, and a glaring tie, perhaps the first he had ever worn and bought specially in honour of his journey. The suitcase he held in his hand was older even than his coat; no longer equal to the effort of shutting and opening, it was bound together with rope.

Ivan was a Yugoslav, a Slovene, to be more exact. Directly he began to speak to me in his own language, telling me that his name was Ivan Omersa and that



he lived in Zagreb, I realised there was something unusual about him. For some reason or other it did not sound in the least convincing when he said that he was going to the International Exhibition in Paris. And when I bought a paper, before I had even had time to look through the headlines, he asked eagerly:

"How are things in Spain?"

"Not too good," I replied and then smiled at the thought that there had been no need to specify the side to which this "not too good" applied. Ivan proceeded to curse the "enemy" with truly Balkan vehemence and again it was automatically assumed that this "enemy" was Franco.

We then made our way to the third-class waiting-room where we had a long conversation. Ivan was a printer, a hand-compositor. He had a sister in Paris married to a French workman—this much was true.

"They met in Russia five years ago," he explained. "I wanted to go too, but I wasn't able to. I hope I'll go later."

I took such a fancy to Ivan that I decided then and there to travel with him in this third-class carriage which was, fortunately, quite empty. He was impressed and incredulous when he found that I had a first-class ticket but was relieved to hear that my paper, and not I, had paid for it.

When we drew up in Ventimiglia Ivan appealed to me: "If these damned Fascists try and make trouble you will help me, won't you?"

I promised I would do all I could but he must have known as well as I did that it would not have amounted to much. Luckily Ivan had nothing more terrible than a thorough search to contend with. As we crossed the frontier into France his spirits rose and he became even more talkative.

"THIS IS TITO"

"You guessed right"—he clapped me on the back with such vigour that I squirmed—"I'm not going to the Exhibition. I'm off to Spain! And you needn't ask me which side either."

\* \* \* \* \*

After we reached Paris I did not see Ivan for several days. Then one evening he came to see me at my hotel. He was beaming.

"Everything's fixed now. I've come to say good-bye."

He showed me his new passport. His name was Jose Merana and he was born in Bilbao. According to the passport he had only just come out of Spain and his French visa was only valid for a fortnight.

His eyes were bright with triumph and I suggested that this was an occasion that deserved to be celebrated.

"How about a Spanish restaurant? You ought to get to know the taste of your own country's food."

Ivan agreed that this was a good idea and so that evening we consumed large quantities of Spanish food and plenty of Spanish wine into the bargain.

When in the early hours of the morning we were making our way home Ivan suddenly said:

"It would be a shame if you left Paris without seeing him."

"Who?"

"Him. Our boss."

Not knowing, or caring very much, what Ivan was talking about, I murmured that I would be delighted.

"Meet me to-morrow, or rather to-day, immediately after lunch, at that cafe in the rue de la Sorbonne. The cafe where the Yugoslavs go. You know it, don't you?"

"Immediately after lunch I shall be having a nice siesta," I protested.

But Ivan was so insistent that finally I agreed to meet him at the cafe in the rue de la Sorbonne.

I made my way there after lunch and sure enough I found Ivan sitting with another man at a corner table. The stranger was middle-aged and clean shaven. His face, under a thick mop of tousled, light-brown hair, was lean and bony. As he removed his cigarette from his mouth to greet me I noticed that his fingers were stained deep orange from nicotine.

"This is my friend," Ivan said, and I could detect a note of awe in his voice.

"Zdravo," said Ivan's companion.

"This . . .," Ivan added, "this is Tito."

## II

### *THE SECRET RAILWAY*

I AM not going to pretend that my first glimpse of Tito, seven years ago, convinced me that he would later become a great political and military leader. The impression he made was in no way an extraordinary one. And those who have seen him at the height of his power during this war confirm my memories of him: he does not give the impression of being an unusual or exceptional man, they say. "He once spent more than a week with our group," a Yugoslav guerilla leader told me. "We were in the thick of the fighting then, but it was only afterwards that we heard that it was actually Tito who had been in charge of our group. While he was among us we had no idea who he was. He behaved just like the rest of us did."

And this, I believe, is Tito's chief characteristic both as a man and as a leader: he is the perfect type of the common man, of the Yugoslav peasant or worker. This explains his popularity with the people, the whole of the Yugoslav people, and this, too, is the secret of his strength. He does not try, laboriously, to anticipate or to follow the wishes of the people in order to gain popular support. He does not need to, for he himself impersonates the wishes of the people. When faced with a problem he has no need to grope for a solution likely to meet with popular approval. He need only act as his instinct dictates and, almost inevitably, the decision he takes is approved by the people, for it would be impossible for him to act against

the interests of the people. As impossible, and in the same way, as if he were to act against his own interests. He is an ordinary man and there is nothing extraordinary about him, any more than there is anything extraordinary about the ordinary peasants and the ordinary workers whom he leads. He feels himself to be, not above, but part of them. He is simply one of them.

His enemies accuse him of being a "terrorist". He imposes his will by dint of blood and thunder, they say. He tolerates no opposition and does not hesitate to annihilate those whose only crime is that they do not agree with him. But even if this were true, it still does not explain why the great majority of Yugoslavs outside the range of Tito's power—Yugoslavs in Great Britain, in the United States, in Australia and in South Africa—have rallied enthusiastically to his support. Nor does it explain the fact that hundreds of officers and men of the Yugoslav army in the Middle East, whose theoretical chief is Mihailovich, deadly enemy of Tito and of all that Tito stands for, have defied their superiors and expressed their desire to join Tito's forces. Yet the explanation is a simple one. Tito is their man because he says exactly what they want to say and would say, had they a chance of doing so. Tito is their man because he does exactly what they want to do and would do, if they had Tito's opportunities. There can be no question of his imposing his will on them for his will is their will.

• • • • •

It was during those weeks in Paris that I first began to understand the secret that lies behind such leadership as Tito's and that of men like him. There was Ivan who crossed the border never to return for he was killed by a hand grenade almost immediately after his

arrival in Spain. There were hundreds of other Ivans waiting impatiently in Paris for the moment when they too would be sent across to fight and perhaps to die. It was the most interesting thing in the world to watch how the International Brigade was formed and how its members were smuggled through France.

The history of the International Brigade has yet to be written but when that is done it will provide one of the most glorious chapters in the history of mankind. Many may think that I exaggerate. Courage and valour, they may say, are not the perquisite of any one century or any one war. Each land, each age, each cause, even, has had its own quota of heroism.

That is certainly true, but in one way at least the International Brigade was unique. Its exploits soared above the limitation of national boundaries. The valour it displayed is the pride, not of one nation, but of the free men of almost all nations. Germans and Englishmen, Frenchmen and Americans, Italians and Slovenes, Greeks and Bulgarians, Poles and Czechs fought side by side, linked together by their convictions and not by national loyalty or national obligations. They fought together and died together for the sake of an idea. You may agree or disagree with that idea, but the world until then had not witnessed anything similar.

This aspect of the International Brigade in Spain must be borne constantly in mind if we are to understand the "mystery" of Tito and of the men like Tito. It is not a mere coincidence that many of Tito's commanders are veterans of the Spanish civil war. Nor is it a coincidence that the same genius for organisation which made it possible for Tito to form the International Brigade should now be tackling, successfully and effectively, the internal problems of Yugoslavia.

Tito, in France, had to deal with the nationals of every country in Eastern Europe. A Croat himself, he treated Serbs and Croats in exactly the same way. A Yugoslav himself, he treated Greeks and Albanians as he treated his own countrymen. One of his chief assistants was a Frenchman. Another was American. He used Greek ships to transport his Balkan volunteers across the Mediterranean to France and the head of the organisation whose task it was to wait in Marseilles for the arrival of these ships was an Italian. Small wonder that to-day Tito works equally well with Serbs, Croats, Moslems, Jews and Macedonians. Small wonder that he has found a solution for the national problems of Yugoslavia. For him neither national prejudices nor racial discrimination exists. Spain had illustrated for him the belief that, if welded together by a moral purpose of sufficient strength, men can be brothers.

• • • • •

Tito's organisation in France was known as the "railway system". Not that he had any connection with the French railways; on the contrary, one of the many difficulties with which he had to contend was that of finding enough money to pay the railway fares of his many thousands of volunteers. Still, that was one of the minor difficulties—the chief problem was how to get these people into France.

It was no easy thing to bring thousands of men to France and from there to send them on to Spain. Apart from all financial considerations, the task was further complicated by the fact that it had to be accomplished in secret. The whole organisation of the "railway system" had to be conducted underground. The passport of every traveller in Europe was stamped "not valid for Spain". That all this non-intervention



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IN SLOVENIA



IN SERBIA

policy really amounted to was, in fact, intervention on behalf of Franco, those who then governed Europe seemingly did not know, or else did not care. Hitler and Mussolini took full advantage of the opportunity made available to them by the indifference and the apathy of the democracies and hastened to send thousands of regular troops to assist General Franco in his "struggle against Bolshevism". Europe, of course, knew this. The Press in France, Britain and America published complete details of almost every transport of Germans and Italians sent to fight in Spain. It seemed that Europe did not mind. But Tito minded.

Tito, in France, realised how critical the situation of the Republic was. He knew that he must send help and send it soon. He knew that all over Europe there were hundreds of thousands of people who would gladly rally to the assistance of the Republic. These people could not be transported to Spain in the same way as were the Nazi "volunteers"—fully armed and fully equipped, in troopships convoyed by cruisers and destroyers. He realised that to organise the transport of volunteers for the Republic was to fight an unequal battle in which almost all the advantages lay with the enemy. He knew all this before he began to fight that battle.

Against the efficiency of the Nazis he opposed the ingenuity of his assistants. Against the almost watertight surveillance of the Fascists he opposed the audacity and skill of his own volunteers. Against the combined police forces of Europe's non-interventionists he opposed the courage and the steadfastness of his own collaborators. And in several months' time he had achieved what was thought to be impossible: he had collected thousands of volunteers from all over Europe

in France, and he had succeeded in sending almost all of them to Spain.

A Greek workman wants to go to Spain, to fight for her freedom and for his. He has no means of obtaining a passport and no money with which to buy a ticket. As a worker he is considered "suspect" by the police and they will certainly not grant him an exist visa. The Italian consul will not give him a transit visa nor the French consul an entry visa into France. But somewhere in Athens a group of workers club together and collect the money for their fares. They apply for a joint visa to visit the Paris Exhibition! Somehow they obtain a certificate from some government department or other stating that there is no objection to their visiting the Paris Exhibition. Mysteriously those names that seem suspect to the police fade from the passports and are replaced by other, innocent-sounding names. Mysteriously, a visa is obtained from the French consulate and another visa from the Italian consulate. At last they set out on their journey. And most of them will reach Paris.

But their troubles are not over yet. The Greek workman's papers are no good—he cannot get to Spain with them. And so he is provided with another passport . . . under the very nose of the often painfully inquisitive Paris police. Where do the new passports come from? How is it that they bear the genuine stamp of the French authorities? What happens to the old passports?

The "railway system" sees to all that.

\* \* \* \* \*

The more I saw of Tito's railway system at work the more I admired it. Ivan's case was just one of

hundreds of similar cases—"easy" cases. But there were others. Often Chinese ships would dock at Marseilles. Their crews were registered as Chinese, their passengers too. But someone saw to it that the officials who had to deal with the port formalities were not observant and did not even notice that none of these Chinese spoke Chinese nor bore any marked Asiatic characteristics. Someone saw to it that no objections were raised when these ships arrived with two hundred passengers and a crew of sixty and left again with a crew of twenty and not a single passenger!

On one occasion that I remember Tito's railway system surpassed itself. Fifty volunteers arrived in France from a certain Balkan country. They had regular passports and bona fide visas. They were led by six officers in mufti. They were on their way to Franco Spain!

However, one of the officers--their leader--was Tito's man. Directly he arrived in Paris he got in touch with Tito. Except for the five other officers they were all genuine volunteers--but not volunteers for Franco! They broke up into different groups and the party set off on its journey to Spain. A week later they met again in a little village behind the Spanish frontier. All except five of them ...

For months Tito's man had had to pose as a convinced Fascist. He had collected fifty men, all of whom were on his side, all of whom knew where, in reality, they were going. They signed up as volunteers for Franco. And, in addition to Tito's friend, the Fascist government of the country in question appointed five Fascist officers to lead them.

And so the fifty men with their six officers started off on their journey as a group of Fascist volunteers. Fifty of them reached their destination--republican

them. It seems a little unfair that we should be using Diez was very much impressed by Tito's reply, and he was to remember it for a long time.

"You, in Western Europe," Tito explained, "have very strange ideas about us in the Balkans. Admittedly we—in Yugoslavia, for example—are simple people, peasants and workers. Admittedly such culture and education as we have compare very poorly with yours. But, my dear Diez, the future struggle—in our own countries, at any rate—will be fought and won by just such people. And there are millions of them. You are afraid that too many of them are dying in Spain. 'The cream of our movement,' you said. But I assure you that the others—those who have remained behind—are no different from these. And that is our strength. Our leaders are all ordinary people like ourselves. One dies and there are a hundred to take his place. No, oh no, I have no doubts or fears about our future, however heavy our casualties here in Spain may be. When the moment comes, our people will find its leaders within itself. And so, you see, our reserves are inexhaustible."

Tito's reply to Diez was not only interesting, it was prophetic. Prophetic of Yugoslavia under Hitler's yoke. Prophetic of Yugoslavia on her road to liberation. Prophetic of Tito's own Yugoslavia, of every true Yugoslav's Yugoslavia.

### III

#### FLIGHT

KLANYETS is one of the smallest villages in the Zagoric district round Zagreb. It is not a typical Yugoslav or Balkan village in Croatia, and especially round Zagreb, the villages are less poverty stricken and brighter in aspect than those further east. They have benefited from their proximity to Central Europe which has helped the peasant to acquire both a higher standard of living and a broader outlook than his brother in the east, where village life is infinitely more primitive and more miserable. Western Croatia and Slovenia, geographically and psychologically nearer to Central Europe, have always been able to boast a greater degree of "civilisation".

Tito was born in Klanyets in the early nineties. His family was poorer than the average peasant's family in that district. Broz senior was a blacksmith who, in addition to his numerous offspring, had his old parents to look after. This helped to make his financial situation a permanently precarious one.

And so Tito's childhood was spent against a background of extreme poverty—or rather, I should say, extreme *Balkan* poverty, which is altogether another matter. In this environment only the fittest survive. And Tito was among the fittest. When a child receives neither medical attention nor sufficient nourishment during the first years of his life, his own organism must provide compensation. Tito's organism proved equal to the struggle and he never knew a day's illness. Those who knew him then remembered him as a ragged,

though he realised then how important these coins were in his father's eyes, it was only when he himself came to have one of them in his possession that he began to think what they might mean to *him*.

His first idea had been to give the coin to his father. What good could it do him? If he went to buy anything with it his father would know immediately, for who had ever heard of a village boy with money in his pocket? His father would be angry, would ask how and where he had got the coin, would not believe his story. The best thing for him to do was to give the coin to his father.

Yet he didn't. Instead he began to think. He thought about the carriage and its beautiful horses, about the rich travellers and the town where they lived. He was filled with a desire to see this strange outside world for himself. Why should he not try? He did not like the village nor the blacksmith's shop. Something in the atmosphere oppressed him though he did not know what it was. He felt like a bird in a cage and it was not long before all his thoughts and all his energies were concentrated on this one problem—how to escape from the cage.

Other coins came to join the first one—more and more tips from those mysterious travellers. Soon there were too many of them for him to carry them all in his pockets. He dug a hole in the yard, beneath the apple tree, and buried them there. No one would think of looking for them there.

No one did. Months and years passed and Tito's capital—the first and last he ever collected—increased until there was a tidy little pile beneath the apple tree.

He set off for the town on foot, early one summer morning. His father had not yet come to the shop

which Tito had to clean out at dawn each day. In the haversack he carried on his back he had hidden a loaf of bread, together with his shoes, which he wore only in the winter and on holidays. He had taken his only coat. And, of course, the coins, the wonderful coins which were to pave the way into the new world that lay ahead of him. . . .

He walked for an hour before he turned back to cast a farewell glance at Klanyets. By now his father must be in the shop, shouting for him, wondering where he was, not guessing, of course. Instinctively he began to walk faster. He felt a thrill of exhilaration. And now that he had reached the town his heart pounded with excitement. He was there at last, on his own. The world lay in front of him, awaiting his footsteps. He looked up at the houses, marvelling that they should be three storeys high. Then he remembered that across the ocean, in the land where his uncle's cousin had been, they were building houses higher still. There, powerful trains swept from city to city. No horses were needed to drag them, they provided their own speed. And big ships ploughed the seas. His uncle's cousin had come back from America in one of these ships. It carried thousands of people—more people than there were in the whole of Klanyets. All this was due to that magic called machinery, which caused you to live like a prince in a fairy tale.

Years would pass and then one day his father and all his father's friends in the village would learn what he had done. He would return to Klanyets in a beautiful new carriage. The entire village would assemble in front of the blacksmith's shop to welcome him. He would tell them of all the wonders he had seen in a world unknown to them. And he increased his pace as though to reach that world sooner.



## IV

### WAR

It was not long before he discovered that the coins which he had spent years collecting and which were to open for him the gates of this new world would not last longer than a few weeks. He learnt with astonishment the true value of money. In Klanyets he had had to work hard, but there had always been food, though not always enough of it. You may go hungry in a peasant village, but it is almost impossible to starve.

Here in Zagreb food must be paid for. Indeed, everything must be paid for. The filthy mattress in the crowded, stuffy dormitory over the stables of the local inn. The mug of tasteless, lukewarm coffee and the slice of dry bread that went with it and were called breakfast. For lunch you had to part with ten of your precious coins, for supper likewise. And next day still more coins would be needed. . . .

Suddenly one evening when he was paying for his supper Tito saw that his haversack was empty, that there were no more coins in it. The innkeeper turned him out there and then; he always insisted on being paid in advance the price of a night's misery in the bug-ridden dormitory, and that night Tito could not pay.

In the street Tito instinctively made his way towards the station. Here at least was a pleasure that cost nothing. He would see the trains, hear the hiss of the engines, watch the people getting in and out. Besides, it was there, at the station, that he had met, some days

back, two men from his village. He was just crossing the street opposite the station when he heard a sudden shout:

"You of all people; what on earth are you doing here?"

He replied that he was going to the station to meet a friend, but even in his own ears it did not sound convincing. He saw the two peasants exchange a glance of sympathy.

"Do you see that house over there?" one of them asked, pointing to a large, unfinished building on the opposite side of the street. "That's where we work. The contractor is in a great hurry to get it finished before autumn comes and he needs a lot of new workmen. If you haven't any work why don't you get a job there with us? They only pay us at the end of the season, but you'll get your food free at any rate."

Tito mumbled that he had already got another job, working at the same place as the friend whom he was going to the station to meet. But when pressed to describe where and what the job was, his imagination gave way, and the elder peasant repeated:

"Anyway, take a good look at that house, so that you can recognise it if ever you need to. There's always work to be had there."

He recognised the house all right. It was a warm, light night and the house, surrounded by the rough, wooden fence erected in haste to discourage the curiosity of the passers-by, seemed completely deserted. Obviously all the workmen were asleep. The gate of the fence was padlocked.

Tito decided to stroll round the streets until dawn, when work on the building was resumed. He walked for another hour or so only to find himself once more face to face with the unfinished house which, through

the darkness, looked more like a ruin than the skeleton of a future dwelling. There was something almost frightening about its blunt, uneven silhouette. . . .

At dawn they found him asleep outside the fence, clutching his empty haversack in his hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the first job he had in Zagreb. He was warned that the work was very hard but to him it did not seem hard, and he soon got used to it. The workmen, who slept in the building itself, rose at dawn and went to breakfast—a good breakfast too, with plenty of bread. They worked from then until noon when there was a break for lunch, and continued until dusk. They slept on the first floor of the house, which was already completed. Some of them had brought rugs with them to cover the floor. Others—the more important workmen, those who had been in the building trade for some years—even had their own “beds”: wooden benches padded with blankets. The men’s only recreation consisted of a stroll in the streets after supper, but they did not stay out long for they were tired and would have to be up again at dawn next day. Besides it was not much fun unless you had enough money to buy yourself a drink or a packet of cigarettes. And only the older, more experienced workmen had money. Tito, like most of the newcomers, had none and no hope of acquiring any until autumn. So he had to content himself with an occasional walk to the station to watch those trains that had once seemed to him so fascinating. . . .

By the end of the autumn the house was finished. At last the great day arrived. The workmen assembled in the courtyard and the contractor appeared, carrying a big sack. The money was given to the three oldest workmen whose task it was to distribute it to the

others. They complained that the sum was much less than that promised by the contractor when they had started work in the spring. "Still it's more than half what he owes us," one of them said, "and that's good enough. Last year we hardly got anything."

Then they divided the money and this was done according to an old-established rule: the senior workmen got most, the juniors least, and those, like Tito, whose first year it was, least of all. Yet when Tito received his wages he was much impressed by what seemed to him an enormous sum. It consisted of several flat gold coins and of paper money too, and he could hardly believe his eyes. He felt the same thrill of pride that had been his when he had dug up his nest-egg from under the apple tree in Klanyets.

The distribution of wages was followed by a farewell lunch to which the contractor came bringing with him great jars full of wine of which everyone partook, though in the same order of precedence—senior workmen most, junior workmen least, "first year" workmen least of all. Finally the contractor presented the oldest workman of all with a white shirt, the traditional gift from the owner of the house, symbolising prosperity.

The men dispersed. Most of them had decided to return to their villages for the winter. A few remained to try their luck in town, among them Tito, despite the grim warnings of his two Klanyets friends. Life was very difficult in Zagreb during the winter months, they said, and work was hard to come by. He would do better to go with them now to Klanyets and to return in the spring.

Tito stayed in Zagreb.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tito's next job was in the metal works adjoining the station. He was taken on at once when he told how he

had worked for many years in a blacksmith's shop, but he had to lie about his age for had it been known that he was under eighteen he would not have been allowed to work there.

The metal workers in the railway shops were peasants for the most part. Some of them had been in Zagreb for many years, others had just arrived and were, like Tito, new to the trade. The life was very different from that Tito had known when working on the house. To begin with, he received regular weekly wages but in exchange he had to look after himself. There was no communal feeding system here and Tito had his food at the station inn, as did most of his companions. Together with three friends he took a room not far from the inn. The room was so small that by day, in order to open the door, the carpet on which they slept had to be rolled up against the wall.

Tito worked for nearly three years in the metal works. During this period he was twice dismissed for "inciting the workers", but on both occasions he was afterwards reinstated. The first "incitement" had consisted in the organisation of a workers' food committee. The food at the inn being both expensive and bad, the workers decided to elect a committee which would itself be responsible for all catering arrangements. This was Tito's idea. He remembered the system that had been adopted when he was at work on the building and how cheap and practical it had turned out to be. But the innkeeper, who was on the best of terms with the works manager, realised his danger and the "cooks", as they were jokingly nicknamed later, were dismissed. The workmen continued to have their meals at the station inn.

The second time Tito was dismissed was in the autumn of 1912. Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia had

declared war on Turkey. Everyone felt sure that the little Balkan nations would be rapidly defeated by the still mighty Turkish Empire. But soon news began to pour in of the astonishing victories won by the Balkan allies. The Bulgarians smashed their way into Thrace and arrived within the outskirts of Constantinople. The Serbs and Greeks cleared Macedonia. In several weeks the young Balkan nations had gained the admiration of the whole world.

The Slavs "across the border" in Austria-Hungary, under whose rule the whole of Slovenia, Croatia, Voivodina, Bosnia and Dalmatia lay in chains, were jubilant. Zagreb rejoiced with the news of each fresh victory. The Slav newspapers were carried like banners through the streets. Students organised mass demonstrations. The Slavs of Austria-Hungary greeted their brother Slavs battling against the Turks.

Officially, Austria was, of course, on Turkey's side. The press was ordered to minimise each Balkan victory. The achievements of the Balkan allies were openly condemned as "dangerous" and it was hinted in the newspapers that the Austro-Hungarian empire could not long remain passive towards any such "disruption of the balance of power" in the Balkans.

But the Slavs in Austria were determined to help their brothers. Everywhere committees were organised. In spite of the censorship appeals and manifestoes were issued. The Slav deputies in the Vienna parliament officially expressed their admiration for the triumphant Balkan alliance.

And when a group of students came to the Zagreb station metal workers and appealed to the workers to support them the response was unanimous. A committee to organise various activities for the benefit of the Balkan allies was elected on the spot. Tito was one



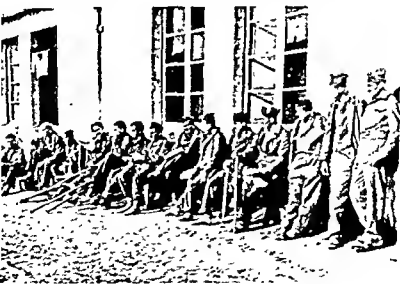
A BRITISH TOMMY  
showing the Woman  
Partisan Leader, Vera  
Lisin, how to operate  
a gun



VERA LISIN  
with her Assistants



**GERMAN PRISONERS** in a liberated Yugoslav Town



**WOUNDED PARTISANS** in an Allied Hospital in Italy



Austrian economic oppression. Many of them had bizarre ideas about what they called "workers' rights". Any many of them knew altogether too much about politics. Take the case of young Broz, for instance. Admittedly the man hated both the Austrians and the Germans. Admittely he had himself led his company's revolt against its Austrian commander and had then guided his fellow soldiers across into the Russian lines. But that was not all.

The man was obviously a dangerous type. An anarchist or something very similar. One of those labour leaders who was for ever prattling about democracy, liberty and the rest of it. It was even reported that he had told his friends—and on more than one occasion—that the Czarist regime in Russia was a rotten system. If such a man were allowed to go free he would only continue to spread pernicious nonsense. Better for him to remain behind barbed wire. . . .

Tito and many of his comrades remained prisoners of war. They languished in the prison camps of the country for which, risking their lives, they had volunteered to fight. Many of them died in these camps. Many became irreparably embittered, their energies sapped, their enthusiasm soured. But some lived to see the day of liberation. And those who did offered to fight on the side of their liberators.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tito fought all through the civil war. Thus he acquired not only military knowledge, the foundations, laid by personal experience, of the astonishing strategical skill which he was later to display, but also a political education which was to have decisive effects not only on his own life and career but on the destinies of his entire people.

In Zagreb, and later in the army, Tito was con-

sidered to be what was generally described as "Leftist", although, thirty years ago, that word had an entirely different meaning from that which it has to-day. That, and the fact that "Leftists" in Eastern Europe are not what they are in Western Europe or in this country, should not be forgotten.

The "left" ideas which Tito had, before joining the Red Army, were the direct result of his personal experiences rather than the outcome of any reasoned political thinking. He had spent a childhood of extreme poverty and hardship. He dimly realised, without being able to translate his protest into the precision of words, that there must be something wrong in a system which permitted such poverty in the midst of plenty. This feeling was intensified by the years he spent as a metal worker in Zagreb. That he and his fellow-workers should lead the existence they led seemed incomprehensible at first, and later intolerable. He may have been the victim of a disillusionment for which his own naiveté was primarily to blame—high expectations and higher hopes were no protection against the reality which he was forced to accept—but in any case his first experiences, both in village and town, kindled in him a fire of revolt for which later events only provided fresh fuel.

Life in the army supplied him with further opportunities of measuring the futility of the state system to which he belonged. He resented, as well he might, fighting in an alien army under the command of alien officers. The Austrian government never regarded the Slavs within the empire as citizens on an equal level with the Austrians and the Hungarians. The Slavs were considered "second-class" citizens unfit to govern themselves, with no rights to autonomy. This racial humiliation, of which Tito was made aware in early

boyhood, caused him to become a passionate opponent of all racial theories in later life.

In the second place, he and his fellow Slavs had been conscripted to fight against the interests of the Slav world. Austria had attacked Serbia and naturally the sympathies of every Slav within the Austrian empire lay with Serbia. Moreover, Austria was also at war with Russia, whom all Slavs regarded as the great protector of the Slav peoples.

But it was only after 1917, when, freed at last from the prison camp where he had spent nearly two years, he joined the Red Army, that Tito, for the first time, began to realise the true meaning of the great political issues then at stake.

"It was a wonderful experience," he later told his friends. "The gates of the prison camps were flung open by soldiers of the Red Army and we were all asked whether we wanted to join them in their struggle. They did not ask us our nationality. It was not a struggle in the name of any nationality. It was a struggle against the oppressive system of Czarist Russia. And we, who, in the camp, had ourselves suffered from that oppressive system, had not a second's hesitation in joining our liberators."

For more than two years Tito fought as a Red Army soldier on every front against the Whites. He fought together with men of all nations and all creeds until finally the survival of the revolution was certain. They fought in Siberia, in Finland, in the Baltic States, in the Caucasus, in the Crimea. There were moments when the situation was desperate and all seemed lost, but they fought on. This period was the decisive period in Tito's life. Not only because it taught him lessons, both military and political, but because it showed him that the people, if organised, armed and strong in

spirit, can win the battle for its liberation, however overwhelming the odds against it may be. It gave him the courage, twenty-five years later, to organise his fellow Yugoslavs in their struggle for the liberation of their country. The odds were against him. Yet he too won.

## V

### *"THE PERIOD OF MISTAKES"*

AFTER living through all the most critical stages of the Russian revolution, Tito returned in 1923 to his native land, although at one time he had thought of making his home in Russia for good. He had married a Russian girl and by her had one son, Zarko, born in Moscow, who, twenty-two years later, lost an arm in the defence of that same Moscow and won for himself the coveted title of "Hero of the Soviet Union".

Tito intended to establish himself in Zagreb and then to send for his wife and child who had stayed behind in Moscow. He hoped and believed that a peaceful life lay ahead of him in his newly liberated country. But he was mistaken. He found that his country had cast off the Austrian yoke only to replace it by that of the Fascist, pan-Serb clique that surrounded King Alexander.

Neither Tito's career nor indeed Yugoslavia's problem itself can be understood unless seen against a background of the political and economic conditions that dominated that country immediately after the last war. During the war the representatives of the Slavs living under Austrian rule had formed committees in London and in the United States to demand the liberation of their people and the subsequent formation of a new, democratic South Slav state. Where the actual political structure of this state was concerned, however, opinions differed.

The representatives of the Yugoslav democratic

parties visualised a truly democratic state in which each people would enjoy complete self-government and would co-operate with the others within the framework of a federal constitution. This project was hotly opposed by Serbia's old politicians for whom the conception of the new state existed only as a pretext for Serbian expansion. The idea of a federal state—the suggestion that all the Yugoslav peoples should have equal rights and equal obligations—filled them with horror. For to them it was essential that the new state should be founded on a purely Serbian basis and that Belgrade should dominate the rest of the country politically and economically, as well as militarily. This was the pan-Serb doctrine but it was not, I should at once add, a doctrine adhered to by the majority of the Serbian people. It was the guiding principle of those Serbian politicians who then, and for twenty years to come, controlled Yugoslavia's destinies. These politicians were no more the true representatives of the Serbs than were, for example, the "super-nationalist" Croats the true representatives of the Croatian people. Yet the Serbian nationalists, backed by only a tiny minority, remained in power throughout the period between the two wars. And the Croatian nationalists (the Ustashi and their like) sold their souls to the Nazis in exchange for a semblance of authority over the "independent" state of Croatia invented by Hitler in April 1941.

When, after innumerable difficulties, elections were finally held in Yugoslavia (November 28, 1920) the Yugoslavs voted for a democratic federal state. The party led by the anti-democratic Prime Minister, Pashich, which alone was in favour of a centralised system controlled from Belgrade, polled only 285,000 votes. The Democratic Party polled 320,000, the Croat Peasant Party 230,000, the Communists 190,000, the

Agrarians 152,000, the Slovene Clerical Party and the Boznian Moslems 100,000 each, and the Socialists 53,000.

In spite or rather because of this clear-cut majority in favour of a federal and democratic state, the government's next move was to outlaw the 59 Communist deputies and then to expel from parliament the deputies belonging to the Croat Peasant Party on the grounds that they constituted "anti-state" elements! Needless to say, a non-federal constitution was adopted. But in the next elections the anti-government parties returned 151 deputies out of a total of 294. During the following years the opposition increased in strength but the same pan-Serb politicians remained in power. Finally in 1928, when the opposition in parliament was at its most active, a government deputy drew his revolver and fired it at the opposition benches. Stefan Radich, one of the leaders of the opposition, was killed outright. Five others were injured, three of them fatally. King Alexander, who had aided and abetted all the government's manoeuvres, proclaimed himself an absolute dictator on January 6, 1929. His rule proved one of the most cruel and ruthless dictatorships that has ever existed in the Balkans.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was in this atmosphere of oppression and persecution that Tito started work in Zagreb. He soon realised that work was impossible under the existing conditions and he told his fellow-workers that, unless they formed a well-disciplined body and fought for their rights, no cure would be found for their misery. Fresh from his experiences in Russia, where the working classes had triumphed, though only after a long and bitter struggle, Tito preached a fiery gospel of revolution. He refused any compromise, any agreement

with other opposition parties, perhaps because he had too strong a faith in Yugoslavia's revolutionary spirit. And, having seen the triumph of the revolution in Russia, he believed that his native land must inevitably follow suit.

Tito's reasoning was not as illogical as it may sound. Indeed, in principle he was right. The conditions existing in Czarist Russia and which had brought about the revolution existed in a similar form in Yugoslavia. The regime was cruel, ruthless and corrupt. The majority of the people was poor, dissatisfied, oppressed and intensely antagonistic to the government. Moreover, the Communist Party, which, by polling nearly 200,000 votes in the first elections, had become the third strongest party almost overnight, was already more powerful, in comparison with the other political parties in Yugoslavia, than the Communists in Russia had been at the beginning of their struggle.

But in practice Tito was wrong. It took him several years to realise that he was wrong, but when at last he did he changed the entire attitude of the Communists towards the other opposition movements and thus succeeded in organising a national front of Yugoslav democracy. This would have been impossible had he maintained the rigid allegiance to Communist technique which was the chief feature of his first political campaigns.

And at that time Tito did not grasp the significance of international politics. To him and his friends it was incomprehensible that the Belgrade dictatorship should be blandly certified "democratic" by Western Europe and that King Alexander should be considered one of the staunchest friends that West European democracy had ever had in the Balkans. He did not realise then



the true meaning of France's foreign policy in Central and Eastern Europe, which was based, for the most part, on strong anti-Soviet prejudice. Consequently he could not believe that the French would not only permit but actually support an intensification of Alexander's policy of oppression. His mind as yet unable to venture into the strange regions of international power politics of which he knew nothing, he based his judgment on Yugoslavia's internal situation, and, as this was desperate, he concluded that the collapse of the regime was imminent. He did not, or could not, foresee the active support that was to be forthcoming from the great powers for many years to come.

Yet this period of organisation of the Yugoslav working classes in the early 'twenties—what Tito later called "the period of mistakes"—had assets as well as liabilities. It was during this period that the working-class movement developed the indomitable spiritual strength that later proved such a valuable weapon in the war of resistance against the Nazis. This period of struggle created tough and steadfast leaders which neither political isolation from the other parties nor the unspeakable tortures carried out by the Belgrade police could induce to swerve from their objectives. The mere fact of being a Communist made a man liable for anything between five and fifteen years' imprisonment. For having visited Russia, five years. For a Communist organiser the punishment was death—not the clean, swift death of a firing squad, or even the hangman's rope, but death through the dark horrors of the prison's torture chambers.

As for freedom—that in itself meant hunger, poverty and constant danger. From 1923 to 1928 when he was arrested Tito never had a home of his own. He was

for ever on the move—from one town to another, from one friend's house to another, hunted by the police wherever he went. In addition there was always the risk of losing his life in the fighting itself. Clashes between the police and the workers were every-day occurrences. Houses were blown up and hostages taken and shot on the slightest provocation.

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Finally Tito was arrested, one autumn evening in 1928, in a Belgrade café. This café was a favourite meeting place for the workers. It had two rooms and a front and back door. When the police raided the premises—which happened fairly often—the workers disappeared through the back door which led into a dark yard and from there it was easy for them to make their way into the slum district round the railway station. And here the police invariably lost track of them. Here they were in safety, here every house was a hiding-place, every man or woman a friend.

But on this particular evening the police had taken special precautions. When one group of policemen burst into the front room of the café another group climbed on to the roof and covered the backyard with their sub-machine guns. To make quite sure they threw several bombs into the yard. The explosions shook the café but did not break the windows for these had been broken long ago in another police raid and no one had seen any point in mending them—they were just covered over with newspaper.

Tito was in the second room with two friends. They fired at the first policeman who entered it and, heedless of the explosions, rushed into the yard. But machine-gun fire barked down at them from the roof and then the police inside the café started firing at them and too. The air rocked with sound, with the fire of their own

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revolvers and the rattle of the machine-guns on the roof.

The three men lay in the yard, soaked in blood, their revolvers on the ground beside them. One was dead and the two others were taken to the police hospital. One month later they appeared in court. In spite of all their efforts, the police could not produce evidence that Tito was a "Communist organiser", and so he was sentenced as a Communist only—to five years' penal servitude.

## VI

### *THE HUNGER STRIKE*

DIRECTLY he entered the governor's office Sergeant Tomich saw that Vlada Milich was annoyed and worried. "Perhaps he's got the sack," he thought, and, never having heard of wishful thinking, he continued to toy with that enjoyable idea as he stood there at attention waiting for Milich to speak. Like the rest of the prison staff, he feared the governor and obeyed him without question, but he neither liked nor respected him. Indeed there was no one, either at Lepoglava or elsewhere in Yugoslavia, who did.

"Read this," the governor barked, handing him a paper. It was an order from the Ministry of Justice for the transport of fort-six prisoners, all recently sentenced, from Belgrade to Lepoglava. There was nothing exceptional in this fresh contingents of prisoners were arriving almost daily at Lepoglava.

"Look carefully through the names. Don't any of them strike you as familiar?"

"No, sir." Tomich was telling the truth, but even if he had recognised any of the names he would have thought twice before informing the governor of the fact.

"What about the name 'Broz'?" the governor demanded.

"I've never heard the name before."

"Where have you lived all these years? We may very well all of us lose our jobs on account of this man Broz." The governor paused but Sergeant Tomich

said nothing. "He's the leader of these Communists, damn him."

"I thought the leader had been liquidated, sir."

"One of the leaders was liquidated! But they multiply like flies. The more you kill 'em the more there seem to be."

"Yes, sir."

"You fool, don't you understand what this means? The whole prison is going to rejoice at the arrival of this bastard. It's even possible the prisoners may try some of their tricks. This Broz is going to be a very bad influence. We shall have to be on our guard all the time. We've got to break their will to resist at the very beginning. You mustn't forget that at the slightest sign of disturbances in the prison Belgrade will give us all the sack."

For one whole hour the governor and Sergeant Tomich discussed the measures that would have to be taken if they were to forestall this dreadful calamity. They agreed that the governor himself should receive the new prisoners on their arrival. He would deliver his usual speech, which was a judicious blend of threats and warnings. He would point out to them that no prisoner had ever succeeded in escaping from Lepoglava and that any attempt to do so amounted to suicide. If any of them were desirous of committing suicide, then they would know how to set about it. The governor invariably ended his speeches with this lugubrious joke.

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Lepoglava prison consisted of two buildings, the old and the new. The old building, which housed the governor, the prison staff and the guards, was an eighteenth-century monastery. The new building, where the prisoners had their cells, was a modern prison

building built soon after the last war. It was separated from the other by the yard into which the prisoners were taken for their daily walk. Both buildings were surrounded by a high wall on to which four large observation towers had been built. These were machine-gun posts manned day and night by special guards. Lepoglava had earned its reputation for being the most impregnable fortress prison in Yugoslavia and for this reason only the most dangerous convicts were sent there.

\* \* \* \* \*

The forty-six prisoners arrived at dawn one day in the autumn of 1928. Together with the hundred guards who had accompanied them, they were ushered into the "assembly hall" of the old building. There the governor addressed them. Practice makes perfect and his speech was admirably concise and to the point. When he had finished he asked:

"Which of you is Yosip Broz?"

Tito stepped forward and the governor took him back with him to his office. He explained to Tito that he knew very well that Tito had been one of the Communist leaders. The fact that he had not been convicted as such did not matter. In courts of law too much attention was always paid to legal formalities. But in Lepoglava there were no courts and consequently there was no nonsense about formalities. The truth of this would soon be made clear to Tito. The governor had great respect for the wisdom of the man in the story who used to beat his servant before the servant started to wash up, to prevent him breaking the dishes. What was the use of beating him once they were broken?

The governor began with an old and simple device, said to have been invented by the Russian police in Czarist days. Tito was taken into a room and told to



sit in a comfortable chair. A man in civilian clothes sat beside him. Tito supposed that someone was coming to interrogate him. An hour passed. Finally Tito asked:

"What are we waiting for?"

"I don't know," his companion replied.

Another hour passed. Tito was tired and sleepy from his journey and soon he fell into a doze. Without a word the man beside him woke him up. Tito did not pay much attention to this—evidently they were waiting for someone and it would not be fitting for this personage to arrive and to find the prisoner asleep. But nothing happened and twenty minutes later Tito again went to sleep. He was again woken. The same little scene was repeated four or five times. Finally Tito lost patience:

"Is this supposed to be a new form of torture?" he asked.

"No, it's quite an old one," the reply came. "We've been using it ourselves for a couple of years now."

Tito was feeling too drowsy to summon up sufficient energy for anger, but when, a few minutes later, the man again woke him he cursed him wholeheartedly. There was no answer and Tito fell asleep once more. The man, realising that the intense weariness of the prisoner now called for a more drastic remedy, flung a bucket of water in Tito's face. In an hour's time he removed the chair and ordered Tito to stand up. Tito fainted. This short respite from reality did him no good; when he came to he was as sleepy as ever. Every conceivable device was employed in the struggle to keep him awake, and this ordeal continued for two days.

\* \* \* \* \*

The hunger strike began three months after Tito's arrival. "It's our only chance," Tito explained to the

other prisoners in a secret conference. "If we are united, if no one gives in we shall succeed. The governor cannot afford to let two thousand prisoners die of hunger. The governor knows that if an inspector is sent from Belgrade he will have either to change his system or else to resign. He is allowed to do what he likes with us because the police in Belgrade know him to be efficient. Once we prove that he is *not* efficient he'll get the sack. And we can't be any worse off than we are under him."

As Tito had predicted, the governor became almost hysterical with anxiety when he was brought news of the hunger strike. When the prisoners after refusing breakfast again refused to eat at noon he sent Sergeant Tomich to tell them that unless the strike were called off ten of them—those who were known to be ring-leaders—would be taken as hostages. They would be subjected to the most fiendish tortures. Tortures which until then even the governor had never ordered because they were so appalling, the sergeant explained. "And that's saying something," he added. "If I were you I'd stop this strike."

But the prisoners did not take his advice. The ten leaders, with Tito at their head, were taken away. Late that evening they were brought back to their cells. They had had to submit to a form of torture which was not uncommon: sharp-pointed sticks had been driven under their nails. It was agony, but it was a brand of agony that did not take them by surprise.

The next morning at dawn the ten men were again removed from their cells. At noon it was announced that two of them had "committed suicide". All the prisoners knew what meaning to read into that phrase. Early in the afternoon the eight remaining prisoners were brought back. They were all unconscious. They

had been beaten with long oval sandbags—a method of beating which can crush the bones yet which leaves hardly any outwardly visible marks on the body. The two men who had “committed suicide” had received violent blows on the chest, and these had proved fatal. Their torturers were obviously inexperienced and had not yet mastered the technique which this operation requires.

Late that evening they were again taken out of their cells. None of them could move so they had to be dragged along the floor. They were brought back a few hours later, their heads soaked in blood. At first no one could understand what had been done to them. Then it was realised that every single hair on their heads had been torn out by the roots. This had taken some time as their hair had been cropped short in accordance with the prison regulations.

Next morning the guards dragged them away once more to the torture chamber. When they were brought back they were—mercifully—unconscious and the appearance they presented was horrifying. Their eyes were glassy and expressionless. Foam trickled from their mouths. Their fingers were twisted in fearful convulsions. Next day five of them died without regaining consciousness. The remaining three waged a desperate struggle for life which lasted two more days and two more nights. When at last they were able to murmur a few words their fellow prisoners understood what the sergeant had meant when he had spoken of a torture so appalling that even the governor had hesitated before ordering it. Later, when Tito described his experience to several doctors all of them agreed that only a miracle had enabled him and his two companions to survive.

The eight men were rendered unconscious by

beating so that they should be unable to offer even the little resistance of which, in their weakened physical condition, they were still capable. When they were unconscious quarts of water thickly impregnated with salt were introduced by means of an enema into their intestines.

Tito later told his friends that no words could describe the agonies he went through when at last he regained consciousness.

When the other prisoners saw the fearful plight of their only surviving leaders they decided to call off the hunger strike. Let the governor savour the satisfaction of victory. It did not matter now. They had fought as best they could against his inhuman regulations, but if he decided to kill them all off in this way there was nothing more to be done. Besides, it was said that the lives of the three men could only be saved if they were given milk to drink. Plenty of milk. Otherwise Tito and his two friends would die as the other five had.

But the strike was not called off. Tito insisted that it should not be. "The worst is over," he said. "I have a feeling that we shall survive. And we'll win all right if we don't give in now."

They won. The governor had been obliged to report the strike to Belgrade and on the eleventh day two inspectors arrived and dismissed him from his post. The strike was ended. It achieved great benefits, not only for the inmates of Lepoglava but for political prisoners throughout the country. The most inhuman rules and regulations were relaxed. The prisoners were permitted to receive parcels of food and clothing from their families. Their working hours were shortened and they now had more leisure. They were allowed to organise a library, to write letters home and even,

once monthly, to receive visitors. And although the torture system was not abolished altogether, it was confined to the "very serious cases".

It can be truly said that the Lepoglava hunger strike brought radical changes to Yugoslavia's system of political prisons. To live the life of a political prisoner immense strength and endurance, both physical and spiritual, were still needed. But now, at least, it had become possible for a man, if he were tough enough, to survive his sentence and this had rarely happened in the past.

For years afterwards each new prisoner who arrived at Lepoglava was told the story of the eleven days' hunger strike, the story of Tito's strike. But although everyone was familiar with the details of these eleven days of struggle, few people knew that for Tito the struggle lasted another four years. For it was only after four years that his digestive system recovered from the appalling effects of the torture to which he had been subjected.

## VII

### UNDERGROUND

EVERYTHING had changed for the worse when, in 1932, Tito returned to Belgrade. The economic crisis had had grave repercussions in Yugoslavia. For a whole cart of wheat the peasant received the equivalent in money of a pair of shoes. The average daily wage of an ordinary workman barely enabled him to buy a loaf and a piece of cheese. Alexander's dictatorship, now in full swing, was becoming more and more despotic, more and more ruthless. It was no longer possible even to travel in a train without a special police permit. The mildest forms of opposition were branded as "anti-state" activities and were liable to end in a sentence of several years' imprisonment.

The so-called "law for the defence of the state" was applied mercilessly to all opponents of the regime. Instead of describing any of the many crimes perpetrated against Yugoslav freedom in the name of "law and order", I will confine myself to quoting certain clauses of that notorious law. I shall not refer to the clauses prescribing imprisonment, penal servitude and even death for such offences as "professing anti-state ideas", "organising anti-state activities" or "publishing papers or leaflets without showing them to the censorship". Unfortunately, similarly draconic regulations already existed in other European countries and were no novelty. But article three of the Yugoslav law for the defence of the state applies the principle of mass punishment to the families, relations and even to the *friends* of all so-called "Communist bandits".

Here is a literal translation:

"The authorities can order that the relations of bandits, directly or collaterally descended *to the fourth degree*, be deported to another district. Also deported to other localities will be persons inhabiting houses about which there exists a well-founded suspicion that arms, munitions, or an armed individual, rebel, or, in general, some delinquent, are concealed therein."

In other words, if the police chief of your district suspects that you have hidden arms in your house, you will be deported, no matter whether his suspicion rests on the vaguest of evidence or merely on personal prejudice. Or if your uncle's second cousin happens to be a "Communist bandit", you and your entire family are liable to deportation. And the law continues:

"If the above-mentioned measures [the deportation of relations to the fourth degree] are not efficacious for the extermination or the surrender of the bandits, and if evidence exists that the latter are aided by a township or village, the inhabitants of these places will be deported *en masse*. The sentence of deportation is passed by the Prefect. The depopulated towns and villages can then be re-occupied by persons loyal to the state."

One can only add that Himmler himself must have studied the "law for the defence of the state" instituted by the royal dictatorship in Belgrade!

It was under such conditions that Tito returned to the task of organising the Yugoslav working-class movement. He had become more prudent now, less eager to take unnecessary risks. Five years of prison life had taught him a lot. An observer of Balkan affairs once said that prison was the real university for all decent Balkan politicians. Certainly most of them have passed

The main factor which influenced the situation in Yugoslavia after 1933 was, of course, Hitler's advent to power and Germany's policy of "Drang nach Osten," which she carried out first with economic and later with political weapons. Tito realised that withstanding the Nazi danger was a necessity that must take precedence over everything else, and that the energies of the nation must be concentrated in the formation of a powerful popular front, backed by the masses of the people, which alone might thwart the designs of German imperialism. He applied himself to the task with characteristic vigour but at the same time the Communist party did not neglect to strengthen its inner organisation. Tito knew also that only the Communists would be able to provide Yugoslavia with that nation-wide framework of political organisation without which no general resistance movement could ever be built up.



closer to the Nazi conception of a new Europe. In the years preceding the war French and British prestige in Eastern Europe was slowly deteriorating. A firm stand by Western Europe against Fascist aggression might have changed the whole balance in the Balkans and prevented German imperialism from gaining ground there. But the democracies were still in the mood of appeasement. For the Balkans this was a major political disaster and one which benefited the Germans to the utmost.

In Yugoslavia the feelings of the people never wavered. Nothing could alter the strong anti-Fascist and anti-German character of all the democratic parties, but their attitude was definitely that of the "Left" and, for Prince Paul and his successive governments, this was a danger signal they could not afford to overlook. The whole machinery of state repression was set in action against all persons or groups that might conceivably be considered unsuitably "democratic". Not only "Communists" were imprisoned, tortured and killed. All "anti-state" elements were subject to the same treatment, and this ominously vague definition was found to include even the students of Belgrade university! The first effect of Yugoslavia's rapprochement with Germany was the adoption by the Belgrade government of the barbarous methods with which the Nazis themselves used to settle domestic issues. The regime was a "record of perpetual police and gendarme terror, of physical extermination of thousands of nationally oppressed people, of continued suppression of all elementary democratic rights and liberties, of blood-baths staged throughout the country in vain efforts to smash the national and democratic aspirations of the nations of Yugoslavia, for the benefit of a rapacious oligarchy of ...ries holding key

positions in the state machinery and identifying the interests of the state with their own sectional interest".\*

As was later the case in so many other countries, the Germans were the first to benefit from the political chaos existing in Yugoslavia, and from the corruption that had eaten into the ruling classes. They were able to penetrate more and more deeply into Yugoslavia's political and economic life.

The need for a national democratic front was greater than it had ever been before and Tito proposed a change of policy. The last pretences of political tolerance had gone. Police repression was becoming increasingly more bestial. A straightforward fight against the regime was not any longer possible. By brandishing your opposition in the face of the authorities you achieved nothing except imprisonment and death, and the movement had need of workers, not of martyrs. A period of purely underground activities was necessary before the struggle could begin in the open.

What Tito proposed was a change of tactics, not of principles. The Communists remained Communists, the Agrarians Agrarians and the Democrats Democrats. The same agreement still bound them. But henceforward their activities would have to be underground activities.

New instructions were given to the leading members of the movement. Instead of scorning all contacts with government institutions they must penetrate them and their secrets. Instead of sabotaging such organisations as, for example, the government controlled trades unions, they must enter them. Instead of ignoring army

\* *The Yugoslav National Liberation Movement*, published by "Free Yugoslavia," page 9. London, 1943.

officers and other officials they must seek to win their confidence and friendship.

The new policy was a success. In the first place the police were confused. The "anti-state" elements were no longer to be found only in workmen's dwellings and factory slums—now they were everywhere, in the army, in the government departments, in the state administration itself. In the second place the severe loss of life which the popular forces had suffered until then was reduced to a minimum. And lastly—and this was possibly the greatest advantage—by at first obliging them to do so, it accustomed men of different political hues to mingling freely together—men of the extreme left with moderates and with representatives of the liberal democrats. Such contacts, established under the auspices of mutual tolerance, are the stuff of which democracy is made. They laid the foundations of that trust and friendship that were later of such inestimable value in the building up of the whole Liberation movement.

Owing to the confusion in which Tito's change of tactics had flung the police, the underground organisations were able to function with a high degree of efficiency. Tito, although he never ceased to be a target for arrest, travelled "freely" throughout the country. At one time over 15,000 police agents were searching for him with orders to bring him back at all costs, dead or alive. Yet he continued to evade their clutches and even succeeded in leaving the country. During the Spanish war he returned three times to Yugoslavia.

In view of the widespread organisation that already existed, it is not surprising that after the conquest of Yugoslavia by the Germans Tito's underground was able to resume its work almost immediately. In fact, the German occupation hardly increased the difficulties

with which Tito and his assistants had had to contend. They had worked underground for years. They were well versed in the routine of such work, in the elaborate technique of daily deception. They were used to being hounded by the Belgrade, if not by the Berlin, Gestapo. They were familiar with, and hardened to, all that the word "underground" implies.

But soon their work entered a different phase. The period of the active fight began. Tito changed his tactics, as he had done before, now that circumstances allowed, and indeed demanded, an armed revolt, a revolt in the open. The meaning and the principles of the fight, however, remained the same as they had been in the days when Tito, fresh from prison, had started the organisation of the underground: this was still the struggle by a national coalition of democratic forces against Fascism. Those who took part in it marched to the battle-cry coined by Tito ten years earlier: "Death to Fascism! Liberty to the people!"

## VIII

### OUT OF THE RUINS

THE roar of the planes was deafening. Never before had so many planes been seen over Belgrade. People gathered in little groups on the pavements, tilting their heads upwards, and even those who had been asleep in bed shuffled, half dressed, into the street to inspect the skies.

At first no one doubted that these were Yugoslav planes. "Manoeuvres to impress the Germans," one man said knowingly. "Simovitch has ordered our whole air force to fly over Belgrade." His listeners agreed that it was not likely that Hitler would attack now—after all, Yugoslavia was not as helpless as some of Germany's other victims had been. Then suddenly someone shouted: "They're German planes!" The cry thrust its way through the crowd like an electric shock. German planes over Belgrade? It was impossible! Yugoslavia was an independent state and Belgrade an open city, in any case. It had been proclaimed and accepted as such by all the belligerents. . . .

In the bright, thin light of early morning the markings on the planes were clearly visible. There could be no mistake. But even now astonishment had not yet given way to fear.

And then the bombs began to drop. The planes had been circling over the railway station in careful formation, as though for a parade. But now they swooped down out of their formation and dived steeply. The square in front of the station was crowded with travellers

who had rushed out to watch the planes. The first bombs fell but still people were unwilling, unable to realise what had happened. Belgrade was an open city and there was no war . . . no war . . .

More planes dived, bringing death with them, flinging it carelessly into the station square. There was no escape for the people crowded there. Some tried to run away, to run to the right, towards the big boulevards. But their path was blocked with death. The station building swayed, cracked and with a roar of protest toppled over. As the walls fell people looked desperately round for protection, seeking it even under the dead bodies of their neighbours. But in vain. Death caught up with almost every man and woman there. A stream of steaming blood oozed its way through the square and only an upturned tram, its wheels still slowly revolving, checked its course.

Those who survived still did not realise what had happened. Their features did not bear the marks of fear or horror, but, more terrible still, were wedged in that stony stupor that is usually only seen on the faces of madmen. And in fact, several hours later, when the planes returned, diving down once more among the crowds gathered in the streets—in all Belgrade there was not a single shelter—machine-gunning the wounded that lay yelling in the gutters, many people lost their reason.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We should leave this district as soon as we can," old Piade said. "They're sure to attack the station again. But first we must get Tito out."

Mile and Vlado followed him to the ruins of the small house. "That is what they call 'blast,'" he explained. "The bomb fell in the street outside, but

the house is—or rather was—so ramshackle that it collapsed at once.”

“Perhaps Tito has been killed.”

“I shouldn’t think so. The cellar’s all concrete, you know. We built it years ago as a hiding-place and we’ve got arms stored down there too.”

“What if the police should come?”

“There’s not much chance of that now. They’re too scared and too disorganised. But it may not be long before the Germans get here. We’d better hurry.”

It did not take them long to dig Tito out. The cellar was still intact notwithstanding the weight of debris that had fallen over it.

“I’d often thought I might die down here in this cellar,” Tito said, “but dying in an air raid is something I hadn’t expected.”

Tito looked round and as he caught sight of the bomb crater across the street the rumble of distant explosions began once more to bruise the air.

“The bombs are still exploding at the station,” Piade explained. “They came about an hour ago. Almost all Belgrade is destroyed. We’ve got to clear out. They may start dropping parachutists any moment now. And this district round the station is obviously a target.”

“So the inevitable has happened after all,” Tito replied with a faint smile. “What about the others?” “What’s happened to them?”

Piade shrugged his shoulders.

“I know nothing. I was sleeping at Mile’s. Suddenly I was awoken by what I thought was gunfire. I assumed that the police must have discovered our whereabouts, but before I could do anything about it I was blown right out of bed! Every window in the place was

smashed, so we decided to leave while we still could and to come and get you out."

"Lucky we did," Mile added. "As we crossed the street a bomb fell on the house—there's nothing left of it at all."

"We came here as fast as we could but that wasn't very fast. The explosions were so close and so terrific that every few seconds we had to fling ourselves down on our faces. Then the planes swooped down and machine-gunned everything within sight. Somehow they missed us—and so here we are. But wasn't there anyone else in this house?"

"I really don't know," Tito said. "I came in after midnight and went straight down to the cellar. We'd better have a look."

\* \* \* \* \*

They dug Tone Mandich, the owner of the house, out of the debris. He and his brother had been asleep upstairs when the raid started. His brother was killed outright but he, by some fluke of fate, had escaped unhurt.

All four agreed that the best thing for them to do was to leave Belgrade at once.

"Once we reach the forest we can decide what to do next," Tito said. "Besides, I'm sure we'll find that many of our friends are there already. And meanwhile the important thing is to get out of here."

The forest to which Tito referred was the forest of Belo Pole which, for the last ten years, had been the rallying point of all underground workers on their way to and from Belgrade. In the middle of the forest they had built a hut, to all intents and purposes an ordinary mountain hut where any tourist might take shelter, but which led to a large underground cellar made of concrete like the cellar that had saved Tito's life in





**MARSHAL TITO**

*Speaking in the Partisan Parliament*



**PARTISAN TROOPS** resting after a heavy battle in Bosnia



**THE PARTISAN GENERAL, PETAR CETKOVIC,**  
wounded fatally in battle, on his death bed

Tone Mandich's house. In this cellar all the underground's most important files and documents were kept and there was always a man on guard there who had orders, in case of discovery by the police, to blow the hut up—himself included, of course.

Hitler's Yugoslav blitz had been so mercilessly sudden and so paralysing in its effects that when Tito and his companions arrived at the hut the guard did not even know that war had come to his country. He had hidden both Tito and Pjace many times before, so there was nothing strange in this—it was merely routine work. But when Tito began to speak to the five men gathered round him in the cellar his tone was grave and tense with purpose. Yet his manner was confident and his confidence banished from the minds of his listeners any thought of the innumerable difficulties that would have to be overcome if his plan were to succeed. No one stopped to ponder the bare facts of defeat, each waited in silence for Tito's orders.

Tito pointed out that the machinery of resistance must as soon as possible be set up. The first essentials were to lay in a sufficient store of arms and to organise reliable channels of communication throughout the country. Neither of these tasks was easy but both must be accomplished without delay: without arms no fight was possible, and without communications no nationwide resistance movement could be organised.

Tito decided to return as soon as possible to Belgrade and there to get in touch with other anti-Fascist politicians. Mandich, too, was to go back to Belgrade, and to organise the supply of arms. The Belo Pole hut would serve, temporarily, as an ammunition dump.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mandich was lucky. Just as he was coming into the outskirts of Belgrade he saw one of the fire engines of

the Belgrade fire brigade service driving towards him. He stopped it, knowing that the boys of the fire brigade were all "safe", theirs being one of the strongest of the trades union organisations. When he saw that the driver was none other than Mechak, a young but active organiser in the Belgrade underground, his face lit up.

Mechak had left Belgrade by permission of the Germans. His job was to fetch water from the surrounding countryside and to bring it back into the town. All the fire engines were now similarly employed. The water mains of the city had been destroyed in the raids and the population was in dire need of water. People were already reduced to filling buckets with muddy water from the Danube and drinking it. Clean water was urgently needed, in particular for the hospitals. And so now the fire engines and all and any trucks that could carry water were speeding out into the country to fetch it. The Germans who were now responsible for Belgrade's supplies welcomed the scheme.

Mechak showed Mandich his special permit stamped by the German Kommandantur which enabled him to come and go as he chose. Mandich's eyes shone.

From that day on, for three weeks, Mechak's fire engine sped to and fro from Belgrade almost without a pause. The Germans let him have as much petrol as he needed and he made as many as four or five journeys a day, always returning with a full load of water. The drivers of the other fire engines, too, showed an equal zeal in their work. There were about twenty-five of them in all and they worked in shifts so as not to lose time. The Germans patted themselves on the back. They had hardly expected such willing co-operation to be forthcoming during the first weeks of their occupation. For after all this was a German affair as

the water itself was distributed by the German authorities. That the local population should co-operate with such enthusiasm augured well for the future. . . .

One day, unfortunately, one of Mechak's friends had to drive his fire engine over a small pontoon bridge which the Germans had laid across a narrow river. Part of the bridge collapsed and the Germans discovered the reasons underlying this zealous "co-operation", which had gratified them so much. That the bridge should have collapsed was not in itself significant. But, when nearby German soldiers came to help the Yugoslav push his fire engine out of the water the game was up.

Although the tanks of the fire engine were supposedly empty—the fireman was then on his way to fetch water—it was much heavier than if they had been full of water. The German N.C.O. ordered his men to investigate. They obeyed, and found the tanks jammed with rifles, bullets, machine-guns and bombs.

It had been a perfect conspiracy . . . while it had lasted. Mechak had not had much difficulty in collecting arms; with Belgrade in a state of ruin and chaos all he had had to do was to help himself in the various military ammunition stores, many of which the Germans themselves had not yet located. His friends in the fire brigade did the rest. As the whole scheme of fetching water outside Belgrade was sponsored by the Germans no suspicion was attached to the firemen's activities.

The Gestapo acted quickly and ruthlessly. Some twenty drivers were rounded up and shot. Mechak who was out of Belgrade that afternoon was warned in time not to return. He blew up his fire engine and made his way on foot to Belo Pole.

Not one of the men whom the Germans had arrested

gave away the hiding-place at Belo Pole, in spite of the bestial tortures to which the Gestapo subjected them before granting them the welcome release of the firing squad. They died with their lips sealed. The arms were safe—the first weapons of the partisan movement.

But Mandich, the man who was responsible for collecting them, did not return to Belo Pole. Several days after Mechak's arrival there a message was received to say that Mandich, too, had been caught and shot.

During these fateful days Tito, too, was in Belgrade, but although he moved quite freely about the city he managed, by sheer luck, to evade the police round-up. By May he was in touch with Dr. Ivan Ribar, one of the most respected of all the old Yugoslav politicians, who had been the first democratic president of the Yugoslav Constituent Assembly more than twenty years earlier. The two men got to work and together made out the first draft of the partisan movement's political programme. Having done so they proceeded to contact other democratic leaders and by June all the democratic parties had agreed upon a joint policy and programme. The general ideas for the military organisation of the movement were also worked out. Manifestos were printed and soon they appeared on the walls of many Yugoslav cities, urging all Yugoslavs to rally to the partisans in their fight against Nazis, Nazi agents and quislings.

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One of the commonest accusations made against Tito and his partisans is that they did not begin their fight against the Germans until Hitler had launched his attack on Russia, the implications being that until June 22, 1941, they had been passive observers of their

country's sufferings and had, "like all Communists", remained on fairly good terms with Germany. I am not an authority on the attitude which Communists in other parts of the world adopted towards Germany before June 22, 1941. But I do know that Communists in Yugoslavia, and Communists and Communist sympathisers in the other Balkan countries, were from the very beginning of the war in the first ranks of the fight against the Nazis. And during 1940 they intensified their anti-German activities. The suggestion that Tito—as a Communist—only started fighting the Germans after June 22, 1941, is the purest nonsense. The partisan movement was organised by Tito and his friends, most of whom were Communists, *immediately after the collapse of the Yugoslav army.*

However, the German attack on Russia facilitated the organisation of resistance because a great many of the German occupation troops were withdrawn from Yugoslavia and sent to the Eastern front. The German plan was to withdraw as many German troops as possible from Yugoslavia, leaving administrative units in the most important centres only. For this reason they encouraged the formation of an "independent" Croatia state with Ante Pavelitch at its head. For this reason they generously doled out to the Italians all the territories which Mussolini, inflated with greed and egotism, demanded. For this reason they handed over to Boris of Bulgaria not only the whole of Macedonia, which Sofia nationalists had long claimed as Bulgarian, but also a large chunk of Eastern Serbia which even the most extreme of nationalists had never suggested was Bulgarian! For this reason they allowed Hungary the whole of Voivodina. For this reason, too, they permitted the Italians to occupy Greece. German troops were urgently needed elsewhere and the more

soldiers Hitler was able to withdraw from the Balkans the better his position on the Russian front would be, with regard to man-power.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first partisan organisation, the "Slovenian Front," was formed in Slovenia on April 20, a few days after the final defeat of the Yugoslav armies.

The first large-scale partisan revolt took place on June 5, 1941, near Valjevo, in Serbia. There peasant units, led by Belgrade intellectuals, Tito's friends, attacked the Germans and the quisling troops, and when the Germans sent reinforcements they withdrew into the mountains. They had carried out both the rules which Tito laid down during the first months of fighting: "Attack them when they aren't expecting it! When they attack you, withdraw!"

The story of Valjevo spread like wildfire throughout Serbia. By the end of June Tito, who was still in Belgrade, had five large Serbian detachments under his command. In the middle of July a big revolt was staged in Montenegro, led by the former staff officer, Major Arbo Jovanovich, who later became Tito's chief of staff and a Major-General. In Croatia workers and peasants took to the woods where they found many Serbs who had made their way there to escape German persecution. Gradually the whole of Yugoslavia was ablaze.

It is impossible to describe or analyse the military operations of the partisans in a few pages and with only the information yet available. After the war, perhaps, someone, who is more qualified than I to do so, will write a textbook on partisan warfare based on Tito's achievements. That is not my aim. By evoking several phases in the partisan campaigns I would merely like to stress the most essential aspect of the war in Yugo-



slavia—the spirit of those who are taking part in it. Without an idea of the spirit of persevering and indomitable courage that spurred the partisans on to victory, the situation in Yugoslavia cannot be understood.

During the autumn of 1942 and again at the end of 1943 Tito controlled nearly two-thirds of all Yugoslavia's territory. In and around Bosnia, an area larger than the whole of Switzerland, was not only under partisan control but under direct partisan administration. But the most inspiring examples of the true partisan spirit belong to the history of their retreats, unique in this war.

Early in 1943 the Germans launched a full-scale offensive against Tito's forces with four crack German divisions, supported by Italians and Ustashi and also by some of Mihailovich's Chetniks. The offensive was preceded by a continuous, heavy air bombardment against which the partisans were powerless as they had neither anti-aircraft guns nor any fighter protection. The offensive was directed against Tito's main stronghold, Eastern Bosnia.

At one point the German High Command announced with pride that Tito's forces were encircled. It was true, but it did not remain true for long. With five of his best divisions Tito fought his way out and retreated twenty miles to the south towards Montenegro—on foot all the way. Tito's men carried 4,000 wounded with them; these could not be left to await capture by the Germans or the quislings, for capture would only have been the prelude to certain death.

In this long retreat, fighting all the way, the only food that Tito's men had was raw meat and leaves. Of the 4,000 wounded—even the stretcher cases kept their rifles besides them—hundreds, who would otherwise

have recovered, died of fever and of cold. They received no medical attention and there were no medical supplies whatsoever. Yet not more than fifty, out of all the 4,000, were taken prisoner by the enemy.

Moreover, these unceasing battles were a severe drain on the rapidly dwindling supply of arms. In order to have the means to continue the fight Tito was obliged to organise, in the midst of this appalling retreat, an attack against two Italian divisions in South-Western Bosnia, with the sole aim of capturing their arms, which he did. With these arms he immediately attacked the Germans and succeeded in hurling them back after a desperate fight that lasted two weeks. And then he was attacked in the rear by Mihailovich's Chetniks. They were well armed and well equipped by the enemy, but Tito defeated them easily: directly they had the chance of doing so, Mihailovich's men, who were mostly peasants conscripted by force, surrendered and joined the partisans.

It was at the end of this great retreat, on May 27, that the first British military mission arrived at Tito's H.Q.—six men in all, led by Lieut.-Colonel Deakin. They were dropped by parachute in the middle of a terrible gale which had in fact delayed their arrival several days. They were immediately obliged to take part in a non-stop march of 24 hours—another retreat, for the Germans had just started their fifth major offensive against the partisans. For the next three months no one from Tito's staff and the British military mission slept more than one night in the same place. Food consisted mainly of herbs supplemented by a tiny ration of horsemeat which, in most cases, had to be eaten raw. For over two months none of them tasted bread.

On June 6, during a particularly ferocious air attack, a bomb fell on Tito's headquarters which were always

very near to the front. One of Deakin's officers was killed. Both Tito and Deakin were hit by bomb splinters, Tito in the arm and Deakin in the leg. In the words of Mr. Churchill, this "cemented their friendship"!

During the same air attack, one of Tito's oldest friends, Colonel Vladimir Dedier and his wife Olga, a Major in the liberation army and now a legendary figure in Yugoslavia, were severely injured. Dedier's skull was cracked by a bomb splinter. With no other bandage available, Dedier gathered some leaves, moistened them with saliva and applied them to his head. In this condition he continued to fight for another twenty-four hours.

Olga's left arm was badly torn at the shoulder and blood poured from it. Two men gave her their shirts and with these a doctor bandaged her arm and managed to stanch the blood. For nine more days she continued to march on with the others. It then became apparent that gangrene had set in and Olga, who was herself a doctor, asked for her arm to be amputated. The operation was performed by a doctor without an anaesthetic, without even an antiseptic. Olga sat on a stone, her husband, who was also in great pain, standing beside her. The doctor amputated her arm from the shoulder. She did not lose consciousness but when the operation was finished she began, for the first time, to cry, silently, without any sound of sobs.

After less than an hour they set off again. A horse was found for Olga and Vladimir Dedier walked beside her. In the evening two pills were brought to her—a heart stimulant that someone had managed to find somewhere. She refused to take them. "Keep them for those who are going to live," she said. She died next morning. She was twenty-eight years old.

Colonel Dedier and another officer dug her grave. Tito, Dedier's best friend, could not come to the funeral: he had to stay with his army. While the two men were shovelling earth over Olga's body a German plane swooped down, its machine-guns crackling. Several bullets hit Olga's grave hut, miraculously, Dedier and his friend were not injured. Dedier put his wife's revolver in his pocket and started off again on the march.

"Those who are going to live . . ." Those who lived on remembered Olga Dedier, and her name spread through Yugoslavia like a legend.

By the beginning of 1944 nearly 25 per cent of the rank and file of the partisan army were women, a fact unique in the armies and the wars of the world.

But then Olga Dedier was herself unique.

## IX

## THE PRICE OF UNITY

IN his book, *My Native Land*,\* the American writer Louis Adamic, himself a Slovene by origin, explains in a masterly way how the nucleus of Tito's partisan forces was formed in Slovenia. He explains it, not by any political or psychological dissertation, but simply by telling us the story of Milorad Stosich, a night watchman. It is a simple story, tragically brief, which might have taken place anywhere in Yugoslavia.

Milorad Stosich was twenty-eight years old. Reports reaching the outside world give no clue to his private life. "Tormentingly bare," says Louis Adamic, "these reports tell us nothing of his family, or of his boyhood and schooling, or whether he was religious or had a girl friend." It is to be presumed that he was just an ordinary young Yugoslav, thin, underfed, typical to the point of being quite insignificant, his personality unmarked by any sign of the destiny he was to shape for himself and, through his memory, for thousands of others like him. Just an ordinary Slovene workman who, had it not been for Hitler's Balkan blitz, would no doubt have quietly ended his days in the factory where he was employed.

But the Germans came and that made the whole difference. The seed of revolt was sown in Milorad's soul, the seed that was to bring forth its bitter harvest of revenge throughout Slovenia and throughout Yugoslavia.

One morning, soon after the Germans had occupied

\* Louis Adamic, *My Native Land*. Harper Brothers, New York, 1943.

Kranj, the town in Upper Slovenia where Milorad lived, a German civilian, who had come with the armies in order to organise that official looting that it known as commandeering food supplies, was found dead, shot through the heart—not an unusual thing to happen to a man in his position.

Faithful to their traditions, the Germans at random selected ten of the townsmen as hostages, and announced that these would be hanged in the market-place unless the men responsible for this outrage gave themselves up to the Nazi police authorities within the next twenty-four hours.

Less than an hour before this delay was due to expire Milorad walked into the German headquarters and confessed that it was he who had murdered the German. He was asked for the names of his accomplices. He replied he had none. He had killed the German himself. The reason? He had felt he would like to, that was all. How was it that he was in possession of a firearm, which was in itself illegal? He had taken it from the factory: as a night watchman, he had a gun at his disposal.

The ten hostages were released. Milorad was hanged on the newly erected gallows in the market-place, and his body was left to swing there for a week as a warning to the citizens of Kranj. A placard was tied round his neck and on it was written in big red letters: "This Slovenian Swine acted against the Reich".

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But no one in Kranj believed that Milorad had killed the German. He had not even been in the town the night the German was killed. He had been on duty at his factory, as usual.

Besides, Louis Adamic explains, those who knew Milorad knew him as a timid, shy young man, psycho-

logically incapable of such a deed. A secret investigation carried out by the inhabitants of Kranj proved beyond doubt that Milorad had had nothing to do with the assassination. The man who had in fact done the killing was a guerilla who had fled into the mountains immediately afterwards. It was obvious that Milorad have given his life to save that of the ten hostages. It was thought that one of them must have been either a brother, a cousin or a dear friend. But no, not a single one of the hostages even knew Milorad by sight. His sacrifice had not been inspired by any personal loyalty, but by a greater, loftier loyalty—loyalty to the spirit of the new Yugoslavia.

Before long the Germans themselves got wind of what had happened, and they gave orders for the ten hostages to be arrested. But too late. They had left the town and fled into the mountains. Other hostages were taken and executed in their stead. But soon there were no able-bodied men left in Kranj: they had all fled into the mountains.

There they formed a partisan brigade, with the ten hostages as its organisers and its commanders. This brigade distinguished itself in the fighting and soon became the terror of all the Germans in the region. The number of Nazis wiped out by its daring rose to several hundreds, soon to thousands. Its feats were proudly acknowledged in the communiques of Tito's supreme headquarters, and tales of the valour of the Milorad Stosich Brigade—as it was called—spread throughout the land of Yugoslavia.

I have described the formation of the Milorad Stosich Brigade because it is typical of the way in which partisan units were formed throughout the country. And therein indeed lies the strength of Tito's

movement, in that it was not organised from above, but sprang from below, spontaneously. No military power can crush a truly national liberation movement, supported and organised by the masses of the people. German military power—the strongest in the world at that time—could not crush the Yugoslav liberation movement, in spite of the fact that the German High Command launched seven full-scale offensives against Tito's forces.

Tito, however, realised at once that the people's enthusiasm and support, although all important, were not enough. An army must have organisation and discipline. In addition to their bravery the partisan detachments needed a co-ordinated leadership, based on the principles of military science. Tito set himself the task of providing it, of moulding his army into a regular fighting force.

In the first place he needed officers. The reserves for the rank and file would never run dry: the whole Yugoslav people were ready and eager to supply them. But it was not so easy to find officers, officers who could provide both military and political leadership. Tito had no use for many of the officers of the old Yugoslav army, though, if they proved to be good commanders in the field, he always accepted their services. But guerilla warfare calls for its own type of officer—officers trained not only in tactics but in the intricacies of psychological and political warfare. The guerilla chief, in addition to being a military tactician, must also be a political leader. However great the man's military qualities, if they are not matched by their political counterpart, if he is unable or unwilling to assume political responsibilities, he will not succeed as a partisan officer. A case in point is Mihailovich, who, as is generally acknowledged, was a brilliant staff



officer but who proved incapable of providing for his men the political leadership they demanded of him. Thus having failed to satisfy, or even temporarily to pacify, Yugoslav political aspirations, he further justified the distrust he inspired by finally consenting to the shame of collaboration with the enemy.

In order to train officers for his army Tito started an officers' school. To many of his subordinates the idea seemed fantastic: how could an officers' training school exist in occupied Yugoslavia except as a tempting and vulnerable target for the enemy? For at that time even partisan headquarters were not static but were constantly on the move from one district to another.

But Tito's officers school was as unconventional as the tactics which its candidates learnt from it. It was a battle school in the literal sense of the word. To every unit Tito attached several special instructors and every commander received instructions to point out to them men who had already distinguished themselves in battle. In this respect Tito's officers' school was unique: no candidate might enter it who had not already given proof of his fighting qualities. The task of this school was more to select likely officers than to form them—this they had already done for themselves during battle.

Up to the middle of 1943 more than 5,000 partisan leaders were promoted officers according to this procedure, and given commands. When this was announced by Tito's headquarters there was a loud outcry among Yugoslav "regular" officers in exile who protested that the whole business was a sham and that it was quite impossible to produce 5,000 new officers in the space of two years, etc.

But these new commanders soon proved their worth. For months to come they were to engage more German

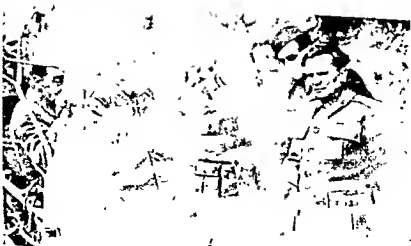
divisions than any other army in Europe, with the exception of the Red Army. They successfully organised an army of a quarter of a million men and for years to come their tactics will be studied in military schools all over the world. Their story is Tito's story. Promoted Marshal of the Yugoslav army, he has been recognised as a full-fledged allied commander, on the same level as marshals and generals who have devoted their lives to the study of military science. Yet, like the officers who serve under him, he has never been to a military school or to a staff college. But I doubt if there is any military expert who would deny that his extraordinary gifts of leadership have won for him a place among the best of this war's commanders. He owes these gifts of leadership, not to the study of dusty textbooks but to the demands which the plight of his country made on him, demands which he has been able fully to satisfy, at the same time developing that knowledge of men and that genius for inspiring them which have helped him to become what he is to-day.

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The next important problem was to organise the army into a well-disciplined and co-ordinated body. Tito divided his armies into eleven main groups under eleven commanders each of whom he promoted to the rank of general. Of these eleven generals seven were former officers in the Royal Yugoslav army—three colonels, two lieut.-colonels, one major and one captain. The remaining four had been commanders in the International Brigade. In entrusting them with such important commands, Tito was not influenced by what their rank or social position had been. He was influenced only by their abilities as commanders and it will be seen that his confidence was not misplaced when one reflects that by the beginning of 1943 the partisan armies



A WOMAN PARTISAN  
in a captured German  
Uniform





MARSHAL TITO and GENERAL YOVANOVICH, his Chief of Staff



ITALIAN FASCIST OFFICERS reviewing Chetnik Troops

controlled in Yugoslavia a territory larger than the whole of Switzerland.

While I am on the subject of the organisation of Tito's armies there is one aspect of it that is often altogether ignored and that I would like to stress. These hundreds of thousands of men, fighting in difficult, often in appalling conditions, against an enemy perpetually superior in armament and in equipment, are all, without exception, volunteers. No conscription has been introduced by Tito in any of the territories he has liberated.

Above all, it must be understood what it is to be a volunteer in Tito's armies, what the true meaning of the word is and what possibilities of revenge and horror its syllables contain. Elsewhere a man may volunteer for the army, may apply for a transfer from his unit to some other unit particularly exposed to hardships and perils. But it is still not the same thing. When Tito's men volunteer, by doing so they assume responsibilities extending far beyond merely personal risks. They know that, should misfortune befall them (and by "misfortune" capture is implied, rather than death, which will, in any case, be its sequel), they are jeopardising not only their own lives but those of their families and friends, and the very existence of their villages or towns. Each man who volunteers knows that if he is taken prisoner, and if the Germans and their agents are able to identify him, he will pay for it not only with his own life but with the lives of his entire family. Even his birthplace will be penalised, his village set on fire. In spite of this they volunteer. By the thousands, by the tens of thousands, by the hundreds of thousands.

It is difficult for a British mind to form a picture of the horrors that are daily currency in German-occupied

Yugoslavia. Yet that picture is necessary for a true understanding of Tito's movement. It must be realised—and not discounted as atrocity-mongering—that if a town is discovered by the Germans to be in contact with the partisans, they kill, without more ado, its entire male population and burn down every house in it.

I will quote one example. One of many. There is a town in Shumadia, the heart of Serbia, called Kraguyevats. In the autumn of 1941 Tito formed one of his first partisan units in that district. These partisans attacked a German company, killing 10 Germans and wounding 26. Fighting took place just outside the town of Kraguyevats.

One week later German troops surrounded the town and began a systematic house-to-house search. All the male inhabitants of these houses between the ages of 15 and 50—in all about 7,000 people—were rounded up and marched through the streets in groups of 200.

No one—least of all the men and boys themselves—had any idea what had happened. Until then, the German soldiers had behaved not too badly on the whole, and many people thought these men were being conscripted for forced labour. Others suggested that the Germans merely wished to check up on all identity papers. Still others said that the Germans were going to pick one man out and that these men would be held as hostages. But this meant that the Germans intended to kill nearly one hundred men in cold blood. The inhabitants of Kraguyevats were not yet used to measuring probability by the yardstick of German brutality, and this seemed to them too dreadful to be possible, let alone true.

Then the Germans invaded the law court and forcibly removed the judges, the accused, the plaintiffs, the lawyers, the witnesses, the clerks, the guards and

even the aged doorman. Next they went to the school and added boys, teachers and the headmaster, Dr. Pantulitch, to the bunch. Then the streets were combed and those who had escaped the house-to-house search were rounded up—shopkeepers and salesmen, restaurant and cafe proprietors, waiters and office boys, artisans and their apprentices.

The hunt continued all day. By now the Germans had arrested 8,000 men and boys, and they marched them off outside the town. Here they spent the night, guarded by several hundreds of German soldiers, hemmed in by a fence of machine-guns. No one slept. It was too cold even to sit. Numb, hungry, apathetic, still not realising what was in store for them, they stood there waiting for the dawn. It was Tuesday, October 21, 1941.

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Many readers may disbelieve this story, dismissing it contemptuously as propaganda. The Germans are human beings after all. . . . But the Kraguyevats story is true in its every detail and the imagination must be stretched to visualise the whole horror of it if one is to understand Tito's position. When Tito's headquarters announce that under no circumstances will they enter into negotiations with Mihailovich and his Chetniks, who have collaborated with the enemy, some people here condemn what they describe as this "uncompromising attitude". One newspaper even defined it as a "blow to Allied unity"! These people should read the story of Kraguyevats, which is only one of hundreds of stories like it.

I, for one, have checked up over and over again on all the facts concerning Kraguyevats. I have compared the German official reports with the reports of men coming from Kraguyevats itself. I shall now leave an

eye-witness to speak for himself. His report reached the United Committee of South Slavic Americans in the United States through absolutely reliable channels. Here it is:

"I saw one non-commissioned officer refuse outright. 'I can't do this,' he said to his superior. 'This is not war. Do what you like with me.' I know the German well, and I heard him. It was the only decent thing that happened that day. The officer ordered him to be taken away. I suppose they shot him.

"The machine-gun crews were distributed down the length of the firing range. Then the Germans began to count us off into groups of forty.

"Will they really...? It hardly seemed possible. But I was afraid to finish the question even in my own mind.

"Some of the Serbs whispered among themselves. They spoke of attempting a stampede through the German encirclement. But who would start it? In which direction? It was clearly a hopeless idea. German soldiers were everywhere, each with several hand grenades, while we had all been searched for weapons.

"What inhibited action more than anything else, however, was that nearly every adult Serb had a young son in the crowd. We thought: 'Surely they won't kill us all'. By now we all realised that our being on the proving-grounds had to do with the 10 dead and 26 wounded Germans. It meant that, according to the posted warning, the Nazis would kill 2,300 of us, about one-third of the 7,000 assembled here. That was terrible enough. But if we tried to stampede the Germans they might slaughter all of us. . . .

"The groups of forty were marched off. Group after group. One consisted entirely of schoolboys, most of



whom still carried their books. Dr. Pantulich, their principal and teacher, ran to join them, to march off with them. 'If you are going to kill them,' he cried, 'take me too. I want to be killed with them.'

"Then the execution began.

"The awful, awful song of the 'machine-guns! I thought it was more terrible to have to listen to it than to be killed. Several times they almost included me in a group which was marched off, but each time I was left behind—as though by accident, only God knows why. Perhaps so I should be able to tell about it.

"The commander who issued the order for the massacre (probably after consulting the High Command) was Colonel Fritz Zimmermann. The officer in charge of the actual slaughter was a major.

"The enormous horror of the event is beyond description. You may think that you can imagine it, but you cannot. It overpowered us. All thought of fighting our way out with bare hands, of trying to stampede the soldiers had long since gone. Many of us who had not yet been numbered off into groups fainted away. Some of the German soldiers fainted too.

"When I came to I was so weak I could barely stand. But I made myself stand; I can't explain why. I was saying to myself, 'O God! O God! O God!' Then: 'I mustn't faint again. I must stay on my feet'.

"Someone suddenly asked, 'Will the world hear of this?'

"'It must,' a young history professor answered.

"'But when?' said another. 'Will it hear in time to matter to us?'

"'It must,' said the young history professor again.

"Then he and the others were marched off.

"The song of the machine-guns burst out every few

stationed in and about Kraguyevats donated to the city 250,000 dinars for its poor—

"The following week a notice was posted on the walls—to the effect that '2,300 Communists and bandits and their supporters had been killed by the German forces near Kraguyevats'. It gave the figure that would have been 'correct' had they killed only a hundred for every dead and fifty for every wounded German, as specified in the order.

"Families were not allowed to seek the bodies of their relatives and bury them separately or with any sort of service.

"Those who wanted to were told that 'Communists and bandits and their supporters were not entitled to formal burial'."

This was the price that Kraguyevats paid for having decided to follow Tito. The Germans counted on frightening the rest of Yugoslavia into submission but only succeeded in committing yet another of the psychological blunders to which they are so prone. They achieved the reverse effect: the unity of all Yugoslavs under Tito's banner. But the price of this unity was a mercilessly high one—Kraguyevats after Kraguyevats. Yet the price she had to pay for following him only strengthened the bond that held all Yugoslavia to Tito.

## X

### MIHAILOVICH

THE most important internal political problem that Tito and his supporters had to face was that of General Mihailovich and the forces under his command. After the collapse of the Yugoslav army many thousands of soldiers, whose officers had not surrendered, disregarded the armistice which the High Command had already signed with the Germans and fled into the mountains taking their arms with them. Nearly all the Yugoslav generals and high-ranking officers had either capitulated or been taken prisoner. Others succeeded in reaching Mostar.

One of the few staff officers who remained behind and at liberty was Colonel Drazha Mihailovich who had taken refuge in the town of Mostar in Herzegovina. He soon collected round him a group of officers with a view to reorganising the troops under their command and with them continuing to resist in the mountains. It is not certain whether this was his own idea or whether it was part of the instruction he had received from the Simovich government before it left Yugoslav soil. However, the fact remains that Colonel Mihailovich was proclaimed commander of all the troops that succeeded in reaching Mostar.

Meanwhile resistance groups were springing up all over the country. Under cover of night small bands of soldiers, workers and peasants would attack German and quisling troops. The many thousands of peasants who had fled into the mountains to escape persecution

and death were, of course, only too willing to join forces with any bands fighting against the spoliators of their villages and the murderers of their families. And when Mihailovich sent representatives to contact the leaders of the more important guerilla bands these expressed their readiness to obey his orders, for, to them, this meant that they would be taking part in a scientifically organised offensive against the enemy.

But other guerilla bands had already established contact with Tito's headquarters. Tito's representatives were not officers, many of whom were none too popular with the people, but political commissars who, in most cases, were already well known in the districts in which they were sent to work. And whenever they had the choice the guerillas—consisting for the most part of soldiers, peasants and workers—chose to follow Tito. For to them Mihailovich represented the past. He was still acting in the name of the old state administration and to most Yugoslav peasants this was synonymous with oppression and tyranny.

On the other hand, Tito's men, in their eyes, represented the future. They came, not only as the enemies of the Nazis, but also as the enemies of the old administration. Unlike Mihailovich, they did not undertake to restore the old regime after victory was won. On the contrary, they promised to free the country from its old yoke, as well as from the German yoke, and to bring into being a new world of liberty and social justice.

Thus the great gulf which lies between Tito and Mihailovich, and which later it became impossible to bridge, was apparent from the beginning. It was in the first instance due to political differences, but was soon widened by disagreement over military tactics. Mihailovich's chief aim was to preserve his forces more or less

intact for the day when the Allies would set foot in the Balkans so as to have a strong army, loyal to the old regime, with whose assistance he and his political chiefs would easily be able to impose their will upon the country. Both Mihailovich and his supporters realised that, were public opinion to be consulted, there was no chance of their continuing as Yugoslavia's rulers. And they therefore based their entire policy on this knowledge.

Tito, on the other hand, declared that his main task was to fight and destroy the Germans. He had no thought of preserving his armies until the end of the war and of using them as a sort of internal police force with which to impose his will. For he had neither the desire nor the need to impose his will by force. He—like Mihailovich—had gauged the feelings of the Yugoslav masses correctly and he knew that in the event of free elections he would command the support of the overwhelming majority of the Yugoslav nation. And he shaped his policy accordingly.

In other words, Tito wasted no time in devising plans for keeping his movement in power after the war. For the time being his only aim was to carry on with the war against the oppressors of his country. If he was able to do this effectively, he had no doubt that he would have the support of the people later.

This strong belief, this certainty of popular support, were the main reasons why Tito, in the beginning, did not take Mihailovich seriously, seriously, that is, as the enemy of the national liberation forces, which, later, Mihailovich was to prove himself to be. Tito knew that Mihailovich cut no ice with the Yugoslav masses. Tito believed in the liberation of Yugoslavia, in her liberation from the enemy, Germany, and from the enemy at home—pseudo-Fascists and pro-Fascists. Once this

double liberation was achieved, such prestige and such authority as Mihailovich and his kind might have contrived to build up, would collapse automatically. He was so sure of this that when, in the autumn of 1941, he had surrounded Mihailovich and his entire staff he let them go free. "I do not want to take it upon myself to perform the will of the people," he explained. "Later the people will dissociate themselves from Mihailovich and from all that he stands for."

There was another important aspect in the situation which Tito did not overlook. Mihailovich was the representative of the Yugoslav government in exile and he later became its war minister. That government enjoyed the hospitality of the British government and of the British people and did not hesitate to abuse both. It launched an intensive propaganda campaign against the National Liberation Front, branding Tito as a dangerous Communist, terrorist and gangster. British and American public opinion, kept in ignorance of the true facts, regarded Mihailovich as the hero of Yugoslav resistance. Tito reasoned that to strike at him, as the military situation demanded he should—for Mihailovich's forces were fighting a deliberate battle against the army of National Liberation—would merely result in providing the Yugoslav government in London with fresh fuel for its vicious propaganda campaign. He preferred to bide his time. And he went further still: he decided to try to come to some agreement with Mihailovich.

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The patience displayed by Tito in his dealings with Mihailovich and the Yugoslav government in exile is surely unique in the history of this war. I doubt if any other European country can boast of a political leader who has shown such moderation and such tact.

There was Tito in the mountains of Yugoslavia organising and planning what was to become the most glorious achievement of the resistance front in Europe. In the heart of enemy territory, out of the ruins of a state overrun by the Germans, he succeeded, in a short time, in building up an army of a quarter of a million men. For many long months this army was engaging a greater number of German divisions than any other allied army, with the exception of the Red Army. His troops suffered more casualties, in proportion to the country's population, than any other troops in the world, not excluding the Russians and the Germans. Their equipment and their supplies were painfully inadequate—many a time they went into battle and faced the formidable mechanised might of the enemy armed only with poles and hatchets! So far as food was concerned, for months they had to rely on a diet of cabbage and coarse black bread. In spite of all this, Tito's army never stopped fighting and its spirit remained invincible.

Yet the government of Tito's country, the government of the country he was defending at a high cost of hardship and sacrifice, refused even to acknowledge the existence of his army. Not only that. It deliberately misinformed the world, alleging that its campaigns were in fact fought and won by those very men who, in collaboration with the Germans and the quislings, were doing everything within their power to smash Tito's movement. And the war minister in that government was none other than the man who, instead of fighting the enemy, preferred to fight those who did—Tito and Tito's soldiers.

In spite of such provocation, for three years nearly, Tito never uttered a word against that government. On the contrary he issued appeal after appeal begging for

unity and expressing his readiness to forget all that was past. But finally the peoples of Yugoslavia pronounced their own verdict and, through their democratically elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly in Yaiché, repudiated Mihailovich and his London backers. Even then certain organs of the British Press smugly denounced this decision of the Yugoslav Legislative Assembly as "a blow to Yugoslav unity"!

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I have read and re-read, checked up and re-checked up on all the available documents with any bearing on the controversy between Tito and Mihailovich, in addition, of course, to all the press reports. Of these by far the most important are the personal letters sent by Tito to Mihailovich, officially proposing an agreement. So far as I know these have not yet been published in Britain and I will quote an extract from a letter sent by Tito to Mihailovich on October 21st, 1947. It is addressed to the "Commander of the military Chetnik units" and is signed by Tito in person for "the supreme command of the partisan army in Yugoslavia". This letter was sent after a series of long and fruitless negotiations between the representatives of both men had been finally broken off, and after Mihailovich had refused to come himself and discuss with Tito the military and political problems that divided them. The letter reads as follows:

"We are informed by your representative, Captain Mitich, that it is impossible for you to come to the final negotiations and that instead you are sending your plenipotentiaries to work with us for the solution of the problems which must be solved between you and us. In our opinion these negotiations will not result in what we and you expected. Nevertheless, we are sending our representatives in the hope of solving some



of the urgent questions, especially those which are now affecting our relations unfavourably.

"You request that we define our stand in reference to particular problems. We do so in general outline hereinafter, but wish to stress again that every question demands a thorough discussion and a common exchange of thoughts. As between you and ourselves we seek the following objectives:

"1. Common military operations against the enemy, both against the Germans and Italians, and the Nedich and Pavelich forces. To achieve this we consider it necessary to form a Common Operations Staff.

"2. A common system for supplying and feeding our and your troops, to be worked out through the Common Operations Staff which would detail special persons or create special bodies to carry out the tasks.

"3. A common division of captured enemy material according to the necessities of the front. Our principle is: *Everything for the front, everything for the struggle.*

"4. Joint regional or local commands, that is, two commands, yours and ours, but closely co-operative with each other—Chachak is an example. . . .

"5. A Joint permanent commission attached to the Common Operations Staff which would attend with the greatest possible speed to all differences which may arise between yourselves and us.

"6. A provisioning authority which would feed the population, oversee the economy, supply the means of warfare, and organise public safety and order. In our opinion it would be a grave mistake if in the present liberation struggle any of these functions should remain in the hands of the old county commissioners, communal executives, gendarmes, etc. To rally the population for the struggle against the occupation it is necessary to instal public officials who would be person-

ally close to the people and therefore in position to assume responsibility. The old gendarme, police and county apparatus as well as the old community officials do not answer the need. The old personnel has been in the service of the occupation and is infested with enemy elements and influences. It does not enjoy the people's confidence and is unsuitable for this critical period. We believe the national liberation committees which the people themselves have begun to establish are currently the most appropriate public representation. . . . These national liberation committees should be elected by the people regardless of political beliefs. In places where it is impossible to hold elections, committees should be appointed by representatives of all political groups which favour the fight for liberation. We also consider it essential to create a Central National Liberation Committee for all freed territories; and in order to maintain public order and safety we propose the organisation of a people's guard in towns and villages.

"7. In principle we oppose compulsory mobilisation. Recruiting should be on a voluntary basis. Men should be free to join Chetnik or Partisan units. Forced mobilisation might be justified only on a local scale in particular instances of dire peril; and in such instances the joint Partisan-Chetnik Operations Staff should authorise it. Recruiting of volunteers has a great advantage in that units of such fighters are better than those consisting of persons forcibly inducted. Moreover, neither we nor you possess arms in such quantities that we could risk placing them in the hands of unreliable elements.

"8. We take the position that all the units, commands and staffs, of both our Partisan and your Chetnik organisations, should unconditionally obey their supreme

commands. It is unthinkable that the lower commands should be permitted to act on their own initiative in actions which might be directed against one or the other of our common enemies or which might involve our joint strategic or tactical problems.

"9. In order to preclude clashes in the headquarters of our respective supreme commands, we consider it necessary that our respective commands should be in different cities, each retaining its own local authority, but each having representatives on the staff of the other.

"10. In the interest of a successful struggle against the main enemy, the German occupation, we deem it necessary to conduct a vigilant and merciless campaign against all manner of fifth columnist and spies . . . who are obstructing our national liberation struggle. We hold that joint military courts should be created which would conduct investigations and pass judgment against these enemies of the people. Spies and fifth columnists caught in the act should be punished forthwith by the command in whose jurisdiction the crime occurred. The command or commander passing such a judgment is to be responsible for the punishment. Motives of personal hate and revenge in cases of this kind are to be punished in the most severe manner.

11. Against the quisling or satellite troops who are interfering with our national liberation struggle . . . joint action on the part of ourselves and you should be instituted for their liquidation.

"12. We consider it intolerable that fifth columnists and spies should have either Chetnik or Partisan identification papers while engaged in . . . their dastardly work against the people. Such persons should be removed from the ranks, whether ours or yours, and surrendered to the above-proposed joint military

courts. Individuals and groups under suspicion, whether they carry Chetnik or Partisan documents, should be arrested immediately and examined by a mixed commission.

"These are our proposals and demands. . . . Other questions exist, but the delegates themselves will bring them up and should solve them.

"We consider the present situation too serious, and the responsibility which falls on us all too great, to wrangle over petty things and thus make co-operation and proper relations between us impossible. We trust most earnestly that you will use your authority to the full so that an agreement may be reached, and that we may combine our forces for the achievement of our ultimate aim: *to free our homeland from the hated occupation and its servants.*"

A close analysis of this remarkable document points to the untiring efforts made by Tito to reach an agreement with Mihailovich on the basis of *fighting the Germans and their agents*. There is no sign here of any "attempt to subjugate Mihailovich's forces"—yet accusation of many pro-Mihailovich propagandists. Nor is there any trace of "communistic ideas". On the contrary the letter deals with all political and military problems from one standpoint only—that of Yugoslav national unity. And although Tito knew that Mihailovich's forces were insignificant compared with the partisan army, which was increasing daily in size and strength, he treats them as equals, proposing "a joint Partisan-Chetnik operational staff".

Mihailovich, in his reply to these proposals, rejected outright points one, two, six and seven—joint military operations, joint military supply system, joint economic organisation catering for the needs of the civilian popu-

lation, and voluntary recruiting. His motive in rejecting the last point in particular was more than obvious: if, like Tito, he were to rely only on volunteers there would be no hope for him whatsoever of building up a substantial army. Indeed, most of the troops under his command were men whom, invoking the authority of the state, he had conscripted by force in the territories which he controlled.

Nor was he able to accept point one—joint military operations—because, as subsequent events showed, he was already firmly determined not to organise immediate fighting but to pursue an *attentiste* policy which did not prohibit an occasional “deal” with the enemy.

In spite of this Tito's representatives were authorised to sign an agreement even on these terms for, even if the cost were high, Tito was desperately anxious to avoid fratricidal clashes which, whatever the result, would benefit only the enemy.

Here is another document which throws light on the events that followed this partial agreement between Tito and Mihailovich. The document in question is a memorandum sent by Tito's headquarters to the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian people (this Slovenian Front now forms one of the most active groups of the Yugoslav liberation movement). The memorandum reads as follows:

“1. The representatives of our staff had a number of conferences with Mihailovich's people. All the conferences were concluded with written statements. Up to October '41 Drazha Mihailovich rejected every proposal for a joint military action, maintaining that such co-operation was too early. Despite this our staff formed a pact with his staff according to which both sides bound themselves to help each other loyally with supplies and information even when Chetnik units

could not or did not take part in military operations. Up to that time our Partisans had freed from the occupation the territory from Sarajevo to Chachak and almost to the outskirts of Belgrade. According to partial agreements reached with Drazha Mihailovich, our Partisan units and staffs permitted the Chetnik organisations to develop their activities in the liberated territories, to recruit and arm new Chetniks, and even to establish their local staffs on the basis of equality with our staffs. And at the outset, responding to the call of our staff, the Chetniks did take part with us in military operations against occupationists and their satellites.

"2. In connection with . . . the 'punitive expeditions' by the enemy against armed units of the Serbian people which can only be described as horrible (especially those in Northern Serbia), our staff proposed to the staff of Drazha Mihailovich to form a Common Operations Staff, to mobilise civil authorities in the liberated territory and to undertake necessary measures for normal community life. Our proposal was that civil authority should be established in a democratic way by means of free elections. Organs of this authority—National Liberation Committees—should consist of honest men regardless of political orientation so long as they believe in the struggle for liberation. But Drazha Mihailovich rejected both these proposals. He replied that a Common Operations Staff is not needed. On the question of civil authority his answer was that the old institutions should be maintained, even if they were never popular with the people, having been established by the hated dictatorial regimes in Belgrade, and having subsequently collaborated with the occupation. However, in spite of the fact that Mihailovich rejected these two basic proposals, a compromise

agreement was reached under which relations between the Partisans and Chetniks were again made possible. As proof of our goodwill, the day after signing the agreement with Drazha Mihailovich our staff sent to his staff five hundred guns and forty thousand cartridges captured by Partisan forces from the enemy. This was a gift on our part.

"3. Yet only a few days after the agreement was signed certain Chetnik officers began armed attacks against our Partisan units. . . . In a railroad train at Pozhega they seized the Commander of the First Unit, Milan Blagoyevich, a veteran of the International Brigade in Spain, who had with him all the necessary identification documents. Pozhega had been freed by the Partisans, and following the agreement we turned it over to the staff of Drazha Mihailovich for a centre of his organisation. But his officers killed our commander after torturing him in a most heistial manner. . . . On learning of this crime our staff sent a protest; we refrained from making the incident a provocation for fratricidal warfare. . . . The following day a Chetnik hand stopped one of our munitions automobiles bound for the front near Kraljevo, killed our driver and the Partisan guards, and destroyed the car. . . . On the same day the Chetniks of Drazha Mihailovich disarmed the Partisan guard at Kosjerats, arrested the whole Partisan staff, tortured the leaders, and finally killed nine persons, among them a Slovenian deported by the occupationists from Slovenia. . . . On the night of November 8, '41, the Chetniks prepared for an attack on Uzhitsé, Ivanyitsa, and certain other places which had been freed and were under the command of the Partisans. For this purpose they assembled all of the Chetnik units in that territory including those working with the Partisans against the Germans near Kraljevo

and Valjevo. With these forces they opened an assault upon us. The Chetniks of Drazha Mihailovich, as they call themselves, and whom the Yugoslav government in London calls the regular army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, thus began open fratricidal warfare. And thus they enabled the occupationists to stage an offensive against us.

"4. The above was clearly an act of treason. The Partisans treated it as such. Although not prepared for so sudden an onslaught, our units in the course of two days smashed the bands of Drazha Mihailovich and captured several hundred Chetniks. The majority of these prisoners were misled peasants. They surrendered, and we let them go home. . . . Thus we began to clear the territory. . . . But the Germans promptly made use of the Mihailovich treachery and initiated a five-pronged offensive against the liberated territory. Nevertheless, the Partisan units smashed all five German blows. . . . The liberated territory to-day is almost completely cleared of Chetnik hands. . . .

"5. During the Chetnik attacks against the Partisans our staff addressed several appeals to Drazha Mihailovich begging him to cease fratricidal operations which only assist the occupationists. Our appeals were rejected of left unanswered. . . . Now it is clear as day why Mihailovich attacked us and refused our appeals. When the Partisans occupied the staff headquarters of Drazha Mihailovich documents were seized showing that Mihailovich . . . is connected with Nedich and the Germans, and that he has received sums of money from them for the fight against the 'Communists'. In reality, to fight the liberation movement in Serbia. Nedich himself has confirmed this as a fact over the Belgrade radio.

"6. Our staff will in the next few days . . . S. N. Make-a-



fresh attempt to come to an agreement with Mihailovich. The Supreme Command of the Partisan and Volunteer Army wants to do this not because of Drazba Mihailovich personally but for the sake of the Serbian people . . . . The outlook for success, however, is very bad. Mihailovich is demanding nothing less than the dissolution of the Partisan army as a separate command, and that all Partisan units submit themselves to his staff. It is clear that our Supreme Command cannot, will not and must not accept any such agreement.

"We are informing you of these developments in Serbia, which are the work of reactionary pan-Serbian elements. We urge you to devote all your strength to enhancing the unity of the liberation struggle in Slovenia, and thus to preclude all possibility of similar events there.

"We want to add finally that all of Serbia west of Kraljevo, Krushevats and Kraguyevats in the direction of Bosnia has been freed. . . ."

Tito then sent several warnings to Mihailovich stating that he was prepared not to interfere with Mihailovich's activities but only on condition that Mihailovich did not interfere with the partisans. Mihailovich refused the bargain and his attitude of hostile obstinacy gradually gave way to a policy of open warfare against Tito's forces. This provided him with opportunities of collaboration with the enemy too tempting to be ignored. And finally in 1942 his "deals" with the Italian forces of occupation, as well as with various groups of home-grown quislings, were no longer denied even by his supporters.

The Italian General, Roatta, who, as governor of Western Yugoslavia, won for himself a reputation of barbaric cruelty and who later joined Badoglio, told Reuter's special correspondent, Cecil Sprigg, on

November 7th, 1943: "I personally distributed arms to 30,000 Chetniks to enable them to take up the fight against their persecutors. . . ."

Why did Mihailovich's Chetniks join hands with the Italian Fascists?

They were linked together by a powerful bond—their fear of the people of Yugoslavia. The Fascist authorities feared the people as the most dangerous of the enemies with which they had to contend. They feared and dreaded Tito because they recognised in him the people's chosen leader. Mihailovich feared the people for the same reasons and he hated Tito because Tito was everything that he himself was not—a popular leader who had captured the imagination and earned the loyalty of the entire nation. And so it was in the interests of both Mihailovich and the Fascists that Tito's movement should be weakened. In the interests of Mihailovich because the triumph of Tito's ideas could only mean the shipwreck of Mihailovich's ambitions. In the interests of the Fascists because each victory won by the partisans constituted a direct threat to Fascist authority. It was inevitable, therefore, that Mihailovich and the Fascists should collaborate; only thus could they hope to avert or to postpone their mutual doom, already foreshadowed by Tito's successes.

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Now that Mihailovich's policy of "making accommodation" with the enemy, to quote Mr. Churchill, has at last become clear to all, many people ask what is to become of Mihailovich and his supporters after the war.

I don't think that Mihailovich will present any serious problem after the war. Once the Yugoslav peoples are given the freedom to choose their own

government Mihailovich automatically will fall into oblivion. For the one thing that is absolutely certain about the situation in Yugoslavia is the overwhelming popular support for the policy of Tito's National Movement of Liberation, which stands in direct opposition to all that Mihailovich represents.

## XI

### *MACEDONIAN DYNAMITE*

PERO was in the middle of his story when a sharp explosion outside shook the walls of the cottage. It was only several seconds later that the door was flung open and two men entered, holding revolvers.

"What on earth is the matter?"

"You'd better go and see for yourselves. I should say it was somewhere near the bridge. Be careful, though."

The two men vanished as suddenly as they had appeared and Pero added:

"From what I know of explosions that was dynamite."

"Sabotage?" I asked:

"I shouldn't think so. Who's going to fool around with dynamite in broad daylight? It's probably the ammunition dump."

He had barely finished his sentence when another explosion, louder even than the first—or so it seemed to me—shattered the windows.

"Another accident?" I queried.

"Well, perhaps not, but our boys work at night, damn it."

Puffing at his pipe, he continued:

"Mussolini sent envoys to meet me. They had plenty of money and arms too—arms that made our mouths water. Lovely bombs and sub-machine-guns. Just what we needed. And that is why I said I was prepared to negotiate."

"Shame!" snapped Sava.

"You keep out of this! All I said was that I was

government Mihailovich automatically will fall into oblivion. For the one thing that is absolutely certain about the situation in Yugoslavia is the overwhelming popular support for the policy of Tito's National Movement of Liberation, which stands in direct opposition to all that Mihailovich represents.

"You be quiet, I'm telling this story. I only brought you along so that you'd help me if ever I wasn't able to express myself like an educated man."

Sava did not answer but contented himself with a cynical smile. Pero was rather pathetic. I had arranged to meet him so that he should tell me something about the work of the Macedonian guerillas. I had never before seen him and he had been told that I was an "educated man", one of those men who "write for the papers". This impressed him since he himself could neither read nor write. But I am maligning him for there were six words that he did know how to write, six very important words, so that he wrote three on one line and three on the other. "Svoboda ili smart" (Liberty or death, the slogan of the guerillas) on one line and "Voivoda Pero Balkanski" (Guerilla leader, Pero Balkanski) on the other. All the same he had been afraid that the task of conversing with an "educated man" might prove too much for him and that was why he had brought Sava with him.

Sava Daskala—Sava the Teacher—was a learned man indeed. Not only was he able to read at first sight any book you cared to confront him with, but he actually wrote verses. Real verses that rhymed and were put to music and sung as songs. He had never, in fact, been a teacher, but his immense wisdom had earned him the honorary title of "Daskala". He was in his late fifties, a tall, lean man with long grey hair: all wise men in Macedonia wear their hair long so as to make it quite clear that they are intellectuals. Pero, who was much the same age as Sava, looked at least ten years younger. He was robust and well built and in his fiercely sunburnt face his narrow eyes seemed very blue. They sparkled with friendliness and he had a charming smile. Here, I thought as I listened to his

prepared to negotiate. That doesn't mean I did negotiate, does it?"

"Of course not," I said rather doubtfully. "What happened then?"

"Musso's chaps wanted me to go to Albania to start the negotiations. They wanted me to meet them in Tirana. I refused, of course."

"Why?"

"I wasn't born yesterday." Pero smiled grimly. "You don't suppose Musso really wanted to negotiate with us, do you? All they wanted was to get their dirty hands on us. The offer of arms was just a bait. They knew how badly we needed them and that's why they showed us those wonderful machine-guns and bombs. And they certainly were wonderful. I've never seen such splendid tools in all my life."

"Tools?" I queried.

"That's slang," Sava explained. "It dates back to Turkish times. Anything that kills people is tools, see?"

I replied that I did and Pero continued:

"I told them that if they wanted to negotiate they must send a delegation to the Albanian mountains and I would wait for them there with my people. I said they were to bring with them at least half of the arms that they were prepared to supply us with. I'd made up my mind to agree to whatever they suggested so long as I could get hold of the arms, and then cross the frontier into Yugoslavia. And once in Yugoslavia I'd soon have forgotten any promises I might have made!" A sly grin spread over Pero's blunt features. "One has to have one's wits about one in deals like those."

"And did you get your . tools?"

"Of course not," Sava interrupted. "The others had their wits about them too!"

Pero frowned at him.

"And where will you be without them?" Sava enquired.

Pero merely laughed and turned to me.

"It's quite true what he says, gospodin. I'd be lost without his filthy brains."

"Let's get on with the story," I suggested, "and you'd better stop calling me 'gospodin'. What happened to Musso's friends after that?"

But before he had time to tell me the door was flung open once more. The same two men were there again, but without their revolvers this time.

"It was the statues," one of them said. "The statues on the bridge."

Pero's face shone with pleasure. But Sava had the last word.

"I knew they were going to blow them up," he said. "A Bulgarian officer told me yesterday."

"And why the hell didn't you tell *me*?" Pero wanted to know, but Sava would not answer him. Then, realising that I had no idea what they were talking about, Pero turned to me.

"It's the statues of King Alexander and King Peter; the big ones on that bridge, the bridge over the Vardar; the Bulgarians have just blown them up."

"The only thing they've done so far that we approve of," Sava remarked, and Pero went on with his story.

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I left Pero's house after dark. He sent one of his men with me to show me the way to the house where I was staying. The curfew was at six but Pero's friend led me through the "Comshulutsi"—narrow paths winding their way between the houses and gardens and known only to the local inhabitants. Thus there was no danger of German and Bulgarian soldiers seeing us.

There were three of us staying at my friend's house,



story, was another "tool" which he must often have used, like his explosive sand bombs. Perhaps he used it when these were lacking.

As a guerilla leader he had, in the course of his career, fought against Turkish, Serbian and Bulgarian troops. Under his right eye a bomb-splinter had carved a jagged scar. His left arm had been mutilated, some years before, by an infernal machine concealed in a Christmas cake which his enemies had sent him once when he was in Sofia. It had killed his wife and his two daughters. He still had several bullets in his body—he was rather vague as to their exact number but two hailed back to what he called the "good old Turkish days", when fighting was fighting and a guerilla was a guerilla. And five—or it may even have been six—be owed to Serbian police troops. During his lifetime he had been the citizen of four states—the old Turkish Empire, Serbia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In all four he had been sentenced to death, in Bulgaria four times. There was hardly a prison in the Balkans that he had not visited—Salonica, Skopie, Belgrade, Sofia, Istanbul. . . . He had blown up many a bridge and aimed many a grenade at his enemies. He handled dynamite as easily and as casually as he handled the foul-smelling tobacco with which he stuffed his pipe. He had spent most of his life in the mountains and indeed it was to them he owed his surname—"Balkanski" means "of the mountains". He usually slept in the open, summer and winter. He was a real Macedonian guerilla leader.

Pero was eyeing Sava whose smile had given way to a deep chuckle. Suddenly he burst out:

"If you don't stop laughing, you dirty dog, I shall smash your head in, and then your filthy brains which you're so proud of will splash on to the floor like raw eggs!"

Hungarians; Dalmatia and Montenegro went to Italy; while out of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina a separate state was formed, and Macedonia was given to Bulgaria.

This "liberation" of Macedonia was proclaimed with much pomp by the Sofia government. Many toasts were drunk to the health of the Fuehrer who had so kindly "liberated" suffering Macedonia and had, in his great mercy, restored it to the "Mother Country". All the Axis newspapers vied with each other in their efforts to prove that the Macedonians were in fact Bulgarians and that Hitler's New Order had brought them liberation. Scores of pictures were published showing multitudes of enthusiastic Macedonians acclaiming their German oppressors, and later the Bulgarian occupation authorities.

During these days of public jubilation over Macedonia, George Valkov and I were behind Nazi barbed wire—in the first German-controlled concentration camp in Bulgaria, situated in the Rodope Mountains and later transplanted to Northern Greece. In the same camp were several leaders of the Macedonian Federalist movement who subsequently joined up with Tito's liberation army. It was curious sharing this prison life with Macedonian leaders while Hitler and his Sofia agents harped on the "liberation" of Macedonia. During the many long hours of boredom which we spent together these Macedonian leaders, most of whom had been guerilla fighters for years, explained to me, in simple language, unassisted by statistics or diplomatic formulae, the allegedly insoluble problem of Macedonia. They convinced me that this problem, far from being insoluble, would in fact be an easy one to solve, provided one approached it from the right angle—the Macedonian angle, as distinct from the Belgrade,

Ika Kraich, a Belgrade doctor, George Valkov, the Sofia journalist, and myself. George and I had just arrived in Skopie, disguised as members of an ambulance unit. Ika, who was born in Skopie, had claimed Bulgarian nationality after the collapse of Yugoslavia in order to escape being imprisoned by the Germans in Belgrade. The Germans duly dispatched him to Skopie. He could not stay there long for he was too well known a Communist. And so he had gone "underground". He was hiding in my friend's house until he had an opportunity of making his way westwards to Bosnia where he knew that Tito was just assembling his forces—this was in the autumn of 1941. George and I were trying to smuggle ourselves into Greece whence we were planning to escape to Turkey. Months later I succeeded. Soon after that George was hanged in the Sofia central prison.

Skopie, the capital of Yugoslav Macedonia, was at that time in a state of chaos. The Germans had captured it on the second day of Hitler's Balkan blitz, cutting off the Vardar valley road which leads from Serbia, through Skopie, towards Salonica and Greece. Thus the Nazi panzers barred the only road of retreat along which the Yugoslav armies might have escaped.

After the conquest of Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941 Hitler needed to prepare his troops for the attack on Russia which was to follow in June, and he withdrew most of them from the Balkans, leaving only a certain number of specially selected regiments at strategic points, to maintain order and to discourage any attempts at resistance. Greece was handed over to the Italians with the exception of the Northern Aegean provinces which were occupied by Bulgaria; Yugoslavia was divided into several parts; Slovenia was shared by Germany and Italy; Voivodina was grabbed by the

I am not going to adduce any historical reference in support of my statement, but only—and I shall try to reproduce them to the best of my ability—the simple words of the Macedonians themselves:

"No, we certainly weren't satisfied with our lot under Serbian rule," Pero said. "The Serbs proclaimed us 'South Serbs'. They forbade us even to mention the word Macedonia, forbade us to speak our own Macedonian language. And now the same thing is happening all over again with the Bulgarians who have come, as they say, to 'liberate' us."

"Are they as bad?" I asked.

"Every bit as bad. The only difference is that instead of calling us 'South Serbs' they call us 'Macedono-Bulgarians'—whatever that may mean! I'm damned if I know! And now, of course, only Bulgarian may be spoken. Our children at school are taught Bulgarian and are ordered to forget the language they speak at home. That, they are told, is a Serbian dialect. Damn them both, Bulgarians and Serbs. There is nothing to choose between them. The only people who let us speak whatever language we liked were the Turks. It would have been better, much better, if we had never been freed from Turkish rule. . . ."

It is difficult for any citizen of these islands where freedom is taken for granted to understand Pero's words or to fathom his bitterness. But I will try to illustrate his meaning with a fantastic hypothesis. Imagine, if you can, that the English suddenly decide to proclaim Scotland "Northern England". Imagine that a huge English police force is sent to Scotland with orders to arrest and to imprison any person daring to call himself or herself a Scot. Imagine that the use of Gaelic is made a punishable offence. Imagine that no school in Scotland is allowed to have a Scottish teacher. Imagine

Sofia or Athens angle, and with the right point of view—the Macedonian point of view, as distinct from the Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek point of view.

Several months later, when we were endeavouring to find a way of escape to the south, George and I spent some weeks in Macedonia. We were sheltered and befriended by Macedonians and it was there that we met Pero Balkanski and his friend, Sava Daskala, in their Skopie hideout. For, of course, they were being hunted high and low by the German and Bulgarian police and so they were living "illegally"—a term which applies to the way of life of most progressive politicians in the Balkans during the past twenty years.

I have already said that the Macedonians in our camp later joined Tito's forces. (The camp was attacked by Bulgarian guerillas in August 1941 and together with a group of other prisoners the Macedonians were set free.) The Macedonians whom I saw in Macedonia in the autumn of 1941 were joining Tito too. They had just begun to form their own guerilla units. Two years later these small units, destined for only small-scale raids on Axis objectives, had expanded into two brigades and to-day they are fighting under Tito's command as regular units forming part of the Yugoslav Liberation army. I do not doubt that they are among Tito's best troops: the Macedonians are the best shots in the Balkans and that is saying something, for in recent years the Balkan soldiers have always given a good account of themselves—too good sometimes. Nor do I doubt that Tito has the overwhelming support of the Macedonian population behind him. Macedonia is, at heart, Tito's Macedonia. And if peace is ever to reign supreme in this unhappy land of bombs and explosives, Macedonia to-morrow will have to be Tito's Macedonia.

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whole. It was only later that Belgrade, Sofia and Athens decided to claim Macedonia for themselves, and it was at their instigation that pro-Serbian, pro-Bulgarian and pro-Greek groups in Macedonia started fighting each other. These groups had nothing to do with the fight for Macedonia's freedom. Instead they fought on the side of our oppressors, our new oppressors, who were and are, in many ways, very much worse than the Turks."

\* \* \* \* \*

That, in brief, is the unfortunate history of Macedonia. It is because all these Balkan nationalists have dealt with the Macedonian problem artificially, by imposing their own will on the Macedonians, that their policy has always failed and the Macedonian problem remained "insoluble". It was inevitable that it should.

But now at last, although Macedonia groans under the Nazi yoke and flames rise from her tortured villages, the Macedonian problem is about to be solved. Solved by Tito. Tito, alone among Balkan politicians, has had wisdom and courage enough to state the truth—that the Macedonians are Macedonians and that they belong to themselves and to no one else. Tito has given complete freedom to a Macedonia limited by her geographical frontiers within a reborn Yugoslavia, and he has appointed several of the most respected and popular Macedonian leaders as his assistants in the administration of the new federal and democratic Yugoslavia.

And what is the result?

Tito is sweeping Macedonia. I am sure that he has obtained a greater degree of popular support in Macedonia than in any other region of Yugoslavia. As Sava Daskala put it:

that no Scottish politician is allowed as candidate in any Scottish constituency. Imagine that it has become "illegal" for the Scots to call themselves Scots, and that, instead, they are obliged to refer to themselves as "Northern English".

Of course it sounds fantastic. Yet that is exactly the treatment that has been meted out in the last thirty years to the Macedonians by Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian nationalists. "South Serbs" according to Belgrade, "Slavophones" (Slav-speaking Greeks) according to Athens, and in Sofia's eyes pure Bulgarians—thus were the Macedonians considered by the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian nationalists respectively. The only people whom no one ever deigned to consult were the Macedonians themselves.

Macedonia is situated in the heart of the Balkans. It is a country without definite frontiers, but it includes, roughly speaking, the territory west of the Mesta river, north of the Salonika district, east of the Albanian mountains and south of the Skopie region. The majority of its population is of Slav stock and speaks Macedonian which, although akin to both Serbian and Bulgarian, is identical with neither. In addition to the Slavs, Macedonia is inhabited by a number of Greeks, Turks, Rumanians and Jews as well. In the Macedonia which remained part of Greece after the last war the Slav element has actually greatly decreased; the Slavs either emigrated to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria or were absorbed by the Greeks. So that now the Macedonian Slavs live almost entirely in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

"When we were seeking to liberate ourselves from Turkish domination," Sava continued, "we received help and support from the other Balkan nations. Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks worked together with us with the object of attaining the freedom of Macedonia as a

"You're talking sense for once. When we have our freedom we shan't need any military governors."

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The more I think about the Macedonian problem the more convinced I am that Pero's words provide the clue to its solution. Once the Macedonians have their freedom, there will be no need of any military governor, whether appointed by Sofia or Belgrade. Pero's words show up Tito's insight in placing Macedonia's future in the hands of the Macedonians themselves. With a single gesture he has won their hearts and their loyalty. When, towards the end of 1943, the official communiques of the Yugoslav army of liberation began to mention the Macedonian brigades and their exploits, I was one of the few people outside Yugoslavia who felt no surprise. As I read the communiques I remembered Sava's words and Pero's enthusiasm. Macedonia has chosen her road, the road to liberation towards which she has always striven. The man who is leading her along that road will go down in the history of Macedonia as one of her greatest statesmen. That man is Tito.

Yet Tito is not a Macedonian. But, like all Macedonians, he is a South Slav. He is above all the leader of the common people, Yugoslav workers and peasants, Macedonian workers and peasants. He has liberated Macedonia and the fact that he is not himself a Macedonian will only make him appear greater in Macedonian eyes. From now on there is no Macedonian who will not revere him for the rest of his life. And future generations of Macedonians will know that the hour of their country's freedom struck when Tito organised his Yugoslav Liberation Front.

For the Balkans too, and for the rest of Europe, Tito's



"How would it be possible for us Macedonians not to join the Partisans? They have appealed to us to fight—to fight the Germans and the Bulgarian occupation authorities. And we will do it. Because they are asking of us something that no one has ever asked of us before—they are asking us to fight for our own freedom. They—unlike any of the others—look on us as human beings. They have promised us freedom, freedom for Macedonia, and we shall fight with them, because, in fighting for and with them, we shall be fighting for ourselves."

I saw through the little window that dusk had given way to night, and Sava added:

"I told you before what I thought of the Bulgarians blowing up the statues of the Serb kings on the bridge. It's the only good thing they've done or are ever likely to do. But to-morrow they will replace them with other statues—Bulgarian kings this time. They have named their most beautiful streets after them. So what difference is there?"

I suggested that the only difference lay in the names of the kings, but Sava did not condescend to laugh.

"Put it this way," he said. "Before the war the military governor of our city was called Savich. He was a swine. He arrested anyone who was suspected of not being sufficiently pro-Serb. He's gone now and we have a Bulgarian military governor in his place. For all I know he may be called Savov. He, in his turn, arrests everyone who is suspected of not being sufficiently pro-Bulgarian."

"That's not the point," Pero interrupted. "The point is that we don't want to have a military governor at all. It doesn't make any difference whether his name ends in 'ich' or in 'ov.' They're all the same anyway."

*Sava nodded.*

"You're talking sense for once. When we have our freedom we shan't need any military governors."

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Yet Tito is not a Macedonian. But, like all Macedonians, he is a South Slav. He is above all the leader of the common people, Yugoslav workers and peasants, Macedonian workers and peasants. He has liberated Macedonia and the fact that he is not himself a Macedonian will only make him appear greater in Macedonian eyes. From now on there is no Macedonian who will not revere him for the rest of his life. And future generations of Macedonians will know that the hour of their country's freedom struck when Tito organised his Yugoslav Liberation Front.

For the Balkans too, and for the rest of Europe, Tito's

decision brings the relief of waking from a nightmare. The difficulties which skilful and experienced diplomats from every chancellery, in Europe could not solve have been solved by a man who had neither the time nor the money to go to school. The plague spot of South-Eastern Europe is neutralised at last.

If Tito had solved no other problem but this, Europe would still have good reason to be grateful to him.

## XII

### *STATESMANSHIP*

THE military exploits of Tito's liberation movement have won the admiration of the whole world, yet Tito's achievements on the political front are, if less spectacular, no less important. More so in a way, for if Tito had not succeeded in moulding his movement into the political shape which it now has he would never have been able to make of his liberation armies a powerful and united force. And after the war it will be the political aspects of the Yugoslav liberation movement that will have lasting significance not only for the internal life of Yugoslavia but for the whole political structure of the Balkan peninsula.

When Tito began to work for the unification of all Yugoslavia's democratic forces he stressed the necessity of complete racial equality. This was indeed a doctrine that he had long preached. In an article published in 1938 he wrote: "The political power of the Yugoslav state now rests with a group of Pan-Serbs who employ semi-colonial means to suppress the other nationalities of Yugoslavia. So long as this racial persecution exists Yugoslavia can never be a stable and well-run state. She will disintegrate when the first blows come from outside."

These words proved sadly prophetic. The collapse of Yugoslavia in 1941 was not due only to the overwhelming superiority of the enemy in numbers and in material, or to the lack of leadership in the Yugoslav army itself. There existed no spirit of national unity

in the ranks of those who had been mobilised. Over 96 per cent of the officers in the army were Serbs—the government's pan-Serb policy would not have tolerated any more equitable proportion—whereas the majority of the rank and file was composed of non-Serbs. It is true that the Croats and the Macedonians, for example, did not fight with the same dogged courage as the Serbs. This was not because they were less good soldiers, but because they felt that this war was not their war. When after the collapse Tito organised his liberation movement and succeeded in convincing every Yugoslav—whether Serb, Croat, Montenegrin, Slovene or Macedonian—that the fight against the Germans and their agents was his fight—the people's fight for liberation—each one of them fought with the same vigour and the same bravery, irrespective of nationality.

In organising the liberation movement Tito insisted, with particular emphasis, on the principle of the complete national equality of all Yugoslav peoples and the abolition of all extreme nationalism, whether of the Serbian, Croatian or Macedonian brand. This was not easy to achieve. The Germans, faithful to the gospel according to *Mein Kampf*, which openly preaches the extermination of all Slavs, had combined this aim with that of whipping up distrust and hatred among the different peoples of Yugoslavia. They staged a cold-blooded campaign of massacre against the Serbs in Croatia and the Croats in Serbia. Hitler placed one of Europe's most notorious assassins, Ante Pavelitch, at the head of the new Croatian state. With the assistance of his henchmen the Nazis carried out mass executions of all and any Serbs that were to be found on Croatian territory. The Germans installed an ultra-nationalist Serb, General Neditch, in Belgrade, and he, likewise,

was encouraged to exterminate all the non-Serb elements in Serbian territory. -

Incidentally, his same technique was employed by the Nazis throughout the Balkans. They handed half of Rumanian Transylvania to Hungary in order to make any kind of understanding between Rumania and Hungary, both of whom were Germany's allies, absolutely impossible. Thus they were able to play off the one against the other. They gave the Northern Aegean provinces of Greece to Bulgaria, at the same time fomenting anti-Greek feeling in Bulgaria, and installed a quisling regime in Athens with orders to circulate anti-Bulgarian propaganda in Greece. The same methods were applied with regard to the Albanians and the Greeks.

Therefore Tito's determination to wipe out nationalistic prejudices was not easy in practice. It was not easy for Serbs to collaborate with Croats after they had had it dinned into them by the Nazis and their agents that the Croats were responsible for the death of their fathers, mothers and children. To generalise is human, and because one has had a distressing experience at the hands of a Croat, Serb, Bulgarian or Rumanian, as the case may be, to hate all Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians or Rumanians for ever afterwards without pausing to discriminate is natural, though stupid.

Yet Tito succeeded and it is indeed remarkable to see that he has banished from his movement the insanity of excessive nationalism which, before the war, had infected Yugoslavia and the other Balkan countries. A Croat himself, he formed a provisional government in which the Serbs were more numerous than the Croats.

Nor will he tolerate religious prejudices. A Communist himself, he has appointed an orthodox priest

to administer the department of internal affairs—one of the most important. He has given the post of vice-president of the Presidium of the Legislative Assembly to a Jew and has appointed a Moslem as commissioner for communications. Every partisan unit has its chaplain, an orthodox or a catholic priest according to the religion of the soldiers in the unit. The larger units, where there are both orthodox and catholic soldiers, have chaplains of both faiths attached to them.

The most important decisions for the liberation and unification of Yugoslavia were taken during the second meeting of the Veche (the partisan parliament) in liberated territory, at Jajce, in November 1943. It was on this occasion that Tito delivered his first big political speech—a speech which the historians of the future will doubtless regard as one of the most significant pronouncements on the Balkans in their recent tragic history. The Veche established the foundations of a new Yugoslav constitution based on the "national brotherhood and equality of rights of all peoples living in Yugoslavia". The historic provinces of Yugoslavia—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Vojvodina and Macedonia—were granted complete self-government within the framework of a federal and democratic Yugoslav state.

In settling the actual frontiers of these provinces Tito and his assistants obeyed the rules of national self-determination which they had laid down, and refused to be influenced by national prejudices. To take but one example—Bosnia. Bosnia is inhabited by both Croats and Serbs as well as by Moslems. Croat nationalists claim that for "historical and economic reasons" Bosnia should belong to Croatia. With the same arguments at their disposal the Serbian nationalists claim Bosnia for Serbia. Tito decreed that Bosnia should

belong to the Bosnians, with the result that the Bosnians, whether Moslems, Serbs or Croats, feel pride in their newly won freedom and eagerness to defend their rights. And in Bosnia the partisan movement has gained added strength.

It is interesting to note that this political act which cannot fail to be of the greatest importance not only for Yugoslavia but for the Balkans as a whole, and consequently for Europe, was severely attacked from all sides by nationalists. Serbian nationalists accused Tito of "dismembering Serbia", while Croat nationalists complained that he had cut Croatia to pieces. These voices were raised not only on German instigation inside enemy-occupied Yugoslavia but in the British Press as well. Once again, as they had so often in the past, the Balkan nationalists presented a united front, both those in enemy-occupied territory, content to be at the beck and call of German directives, and those who pose as "democratic" exiles outside German Europe.

I should like to point out here that in any case these allegedly insoluble problems of nationality in Yugoslavia have been too much publicised in the British and the American Press. This is again the responsibility of these same nationalists whose purpose was to create the impression that Yugoslavia could only have a stable government if she had a "strong regime", capable of subduing the various nationalities. Tito has proved that this was a fallacy by demonstrating that the freedom which a state gives to its citizens does not weaken but on the contrary strengthens that state. This is a lesson that cannot be learnt too often. Similarly, the subjected nationalities of Czarist Russia worked and fought against the rulers who oppressed them, whereas today there are no more enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet



regime than the former "colonial" peoples of Russia. Because, like Tito's Yugoslavs, they have been granted freedom, equality and self government, and because, like them, they feel that the state in which they live is really their state and therefore a state for which it is worth while to fight and die.

People who have discussed this matter with Tito tell me that his ideas for future government follow the Russian pattern. Yugoslavia will have two chambers, the first of which will house the representatives of the state elected according to the density of the population—one representative for every 40,000 or 50,000 inhabitants. The second chamber will be the Chamber of Nationalities in which there will be an equal number of representatives for each of the peoples of Yugoslavia. This means that although in the first chamber there will be a Serbian majority, the Serbs being the most numerous of the Yugoslav peoples, in the second chamber the Macedonians, for example, a group five times smaller in size than the Serbs, will have an equal number of representatives. (The American legislative system is very similar. Elections for the House of Representatives—Congress—are held according to the density of the population. A large state may have five or ten times as many representatives as another smaller state. But in the Senate each state is represented by two senators, no matter what its size.)

Tito's second principle—democracy for the people—has been applied with equal determination. When the partisan army liberates a village its first task is not to appoint a military governor but to organise democratic elections. The partisan commander summons all the inhabitants into the village square and proposes to them that they should elect representatives who will

work in collaboration with the partisan army. In this way Tito was able from the very beginning to forge a democratic link between his forces and the people, and this later proved invaluable. The supply problems of the army, for example, although under the supervision of partisan headquarters, are left almost entirely in the hands of the local national committees. No requisitioning is allowed and no compulsory measures have been introduced. (This is in direct opposition to the methods employed by the German, quisling and Mihailovich troops. The commander acquaints the committee with his needs and leaves it to do what it can to satisfy them. Freed from the threat of requisitioning and persecution, the peasants have done wonders. With no exception they have always voluntarily supplied more food to the partisan army than either the commander or the committee, in their most optimistic calculations, had dared expect. Tito's system of "democracy for the people" has given back to the peasants the faith which they had in themselves. To them the partisans are not an alien army which has come to rob and plunder them. The partisan army is their own army.

Tito's third principle—democracy in government—was responsible for the formation of a parliament in Jajce after representatives had been elected in the liberated territories. (The territories still under the control of the enemy were represented in this parliament by temporary national committees composed of district democratic leaders.) This parliament, known as the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, elected a Presidium to which it delegated full powers to be operative whenever the Council was not in session. The Presidium remains responsible to the Council. Most of the 208 members of the Council returned to their work, many of them to occupied

territory, and until the Council meets again the Presidium will exercise "all legislative and executive functions".

The Presidium, in its turn, appointed the National Committee (or Cabinet). This consists of one president, three vice-presidents and a number of commissioners (or ministers). The Council voted that the Committee should have "all the characteristics of a national government" and proclaimed it the "executive organ of the Council". Insofar as the constitutional problems of Yugoslavia are concerned, the Council passed an historic resolution depriving the emigre "Yugoslav" government of its rights and warning all Allied authorities that the affairs of Yugoslavia can only be decided in discussion and by agreement with the real representatives of the Yugoslav people.

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But perhaps the greatest achievement of the partisan parliament is that it has cemented the unity of all the important Yugoslav political movements, from the Communists to the Right Wing Conservatives. It is this aspect of Tito's liberation movement that is understood least well in Britain, no doubt because most of the anti-Tito propaganda is based on the fact that he, Tito, is a Communist.

*Tito is a Communist. He is the leader of the Yugoslav Communists.* But the true meaning of Yugoslav "Communism" must be understood, and so must its relationship to the other political movements in Yugoslavia, if one is to grasp the underlying principles of the national liberation movement.

In his speech in the House of Commons on February 2nd, 1944, Mr. Winston Churchill defined in a masterly way the position of the Communist element in the Yugoslav army of liberation. "The Communist element

has the honour of being the beginners, but as the movement increased in strength and numbers a modifying and unifying process has taken place, and national conceptions have supervened. In Marshal Tito the partisans have found an outstanding leader, glorious in the fight for freedom."

This should always be remembered: the Communists were the beginners. It was they who organised and built up the partisan movement in its earliest stages, it was they who provided its most energetic leaders, among them the Commander-in-Chief, Tito. And then the others followed. All the national democratic groups which were not Communist nor yet "anti-Communist".

I should perhaps explain here that the "anti-Communist" outlook which is prevalent in Western Europe, even in Left Wing political movements, does not exist, in the same rigid force, in the Balkans in general and in Yugoslavia in particular. And so in Yugoslavia it was as easy for Tito, the Communist, to assume leadership of the masses of the people as it was, for example, for Winston Churchill, the Conservative, to win the support of a great number of people in Britain who are not Conservatives. This does not mean that Tito has ceased to be a Communist any more than—to extend my comparison a little further—Churchill has ceased to be a Conservative. Tito is still the leader of Yugoslavia's Communists, just as Churchill is the leader of the Conservative party. That does not prevent either of them, in addition to leading his own political group, from enjoying the support of a wide coalition.

The comparison may be inadequate, but I cannot resist using it again to illustrate an important point. Just as Britain in the last years has been mainly conservative—or at least this has been the trend of the elections—so Yugoslavia has been progressive or, if

you prefer it, *revolutionary in spirit*. Just as *tradition-alism* and the continuity of the political system have been cherished as necessities by many politicians in this country, so the *spirit of revolt* and the desire for radical changes have inspired most of the Yugoslav political leaders ever since the foundations of the Yugoslav state twenty-five years ago. Tito would never have had the overwhelming support of the Yugoslav peoples, even after his military triumphs, if the ideas he represents did not correspond to the aspirations entertained by hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs long before this war. The fact that Western Europe remained for so long in ignorance of the revolutionary character of Yugoslavia is due mainly to the fact that the governments of Yugoslavia between the two wars were, with very few exceptions, dictatorial governments who made it their business to present a misleading facade to the outside world. Until the war no one in Western Europe had even heard of Tito, yet for many years he had been the leader of the Yugoslav working classes and of all their professional organisations (these were, of course, suppressed by the government and consequently "illegal").

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I should be giving an incomplete and therefore misleading picture of Tito's movement if I did not mention Tito's influence on the Balkans as a whole, which, in its turn, cannot fail to have repercussions on the rest of Europe. Revolutionary leaders of Tito's calibre, although their destiny remains bound up with that of their country, radiate a spirit that refuses to be confined behind as artificial a fence as that of state boundaries.

I believe that not only the Yugoslav but all the Balkan peoples will one day *revere Tito as the great*

man in whose achievements their aspirations also had a stake. Before the war all the Balkan nations had oppressive and dictatorial governments just as Yugoslavia had. The difference was only one of degree, but it is equally true of Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Rumania. Under these regimes the Balkan nations were like a "sleeping giant". German domination, by bringing them up against oppression in a form more crudely barbarous than any they had known before, awoke that sleeping giant—the desire for freedom. The sleeping giant awoke earlier in some Balkan nations than in others: they were in the first ranks of the fighters for freedom. Elsewhere the giant awoke later and in some countries, perhaps, he has only just begun to stir. But the tendency is everywhere the same and, though the process may be slow, it will continue to develop.

It is not a mere coincidence that Marshal Tito has become the centre of all popular resistance movements in the Balkans. Nor is it only the military achievements of his armies that have inspired partisans in Albania, Greece and Bulgaria to take up the cudgels for freedom. It is the political challenge of his leadership that has provoked response even outside the frontiers of Yugoslavia. The "headline news" from the Balkans is that the Balkan resistance fronts in the different Balkan countries are collaborating with each other despite the melancholy predictions of the Balkan experts who foresaw another era of internal Balkan strife due to "hereditary enmities" and "incompatible national interests."

Tito has proved that wherever the people have the determination to govern their country themselves there can be no salvation, not only for the Nazi aggressors and their attendant quislings, but no salva-

## MARSHAL TITO

tion, either, for the old ruling cliques that thrived in a self-made climate of oppression and persecution.

The new Yugoslavia brings freedom, democracy and social justice not only to Yugoslavs. The turning-point in the history of the Balkans has been reached. Just as the new Yugoslavia can only be Tito's Yugoslavia, so the new Balkans can only be Tito's Balkans. For the rest of Europe the fact is of the utmost significance.

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I do not think there could be a more fitting Postscript to this book than this poem by Radovan Zechevich, the Montenegrin poet, now partisan leader in Tito's army:

### WHO IS TITO?

Goebbels asks: "Who is Tito?"

And my gun answers: We are all Tito,

And you've learnt the reply through our bullets.

Tito is in us all and our strength is his strength.

You ask what man and what woman gave him birth:

He is born of an angry father and the people.

Do not search for knowledge of him in the Gestapo files.

Listen to the green mountain; echo will throw you the thud  
of his horse's hooves.

Bend over our clear brooks and flee from the image of Tito.

And in our bayonets before you die you'll meet his image

And in our flags you will read his story.

[again.

You ask: "Who is Tito?"

And my gun answers: "Tito is Tito!"

Tito is the earth, the army and the river.

He is your terror and our victories over you.

The chapters of his story are your first, second, third, fourth,  
fifth and sixth offensives.

Unfold your bullet-riddled standards and read in them his  
story.

Read it in the lists of your dead and of our victories:

Your dead are his biographers.

You will read the next chapter to-morrow night,

When the ray of our searchlight pierces your positions,

And on your white faces spells out the name of TITO.